SIDNEY LENS

Sidney Lens (1912–1986) was a peace, social justice, and labor organizer for over five decades, and helped to found several key national antiwar coalitions and the Chicago Peace Council. A prolific writer, he was the author of twenty-two books and countless articles, and served as contributing editor to a variety of progressive publications. A member of the Socialist and Citizens Parties, he ran for several state and national offices, helped organize Voters for Peace, and was chair of the Illinois Impeach Nixon Committee. He also taught and lectured at several colleges.

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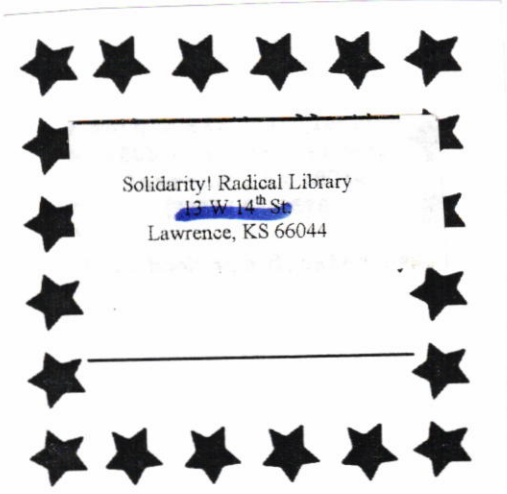


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SIDNEY LENS

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the picket line and service the buses in accord with their contract. In the 1930s, contract or no contract, this union would have honored the picket line.

In the western United States, Phelps Dodge copper miners on strike for many months receive regular pledges of support and occasional cash contributions from other unions. But union members across the country continue to handle products made from Phelps Dodge's scab copper; to do anything else might mean costly lawsuits or even imprisonment of labor leaders. In an earlier era, union officers would have taken their chances. Today, most unions are prudent: stingy with their treasuries, protective of their investments, and obsessed with their officials' job security.

And the rest of us—liberals, radicals—have become ever so careful, too, weighing the issues, choosing which causes we will support and which we will ignore or undermine, deciding "objectively," as if there were an impartial measure to determine whether, in any particular instance, the rich or the poor are "in the right."

The vanishing sanctity of the picket line is as valid an indicator as any of our political disarray and decay. We'll have a functioning movement when the old rule is in full force again: Never cross a picket line.

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Introduction

How strange to me, seeing these pieces with the name "Sidney Lens." To all of us in the movement—labor, peace, civil rights — he was blunt as Chicago, sometimes rude as a taxi driver, but always, no matter which side of the fight we were on at a given moment, he was Sid, prolific writer, tireless speaker, a man possessed of a strong ego, strong ideas, the fury and anger of the prophet.

Much of Sid was a product of time and place, of a certain kind of labor movement which doesn't exist today. One feels his pain in the essay "Hold That Line," when a young peace activist crossed a picket line, leaving him behind. (Yet while Sid may have been left behind at that point by a younger generation, he was on the correct side of the line and it was the peace activist who would eventually have to run to catch up.) One finds this sense of "date" in the chapter from The Crisis of American Labor *when he writes of hourly wages of $3.50 an hour as being very good. I looked for the copyright date—1959—and yes, $3.50 an hour was pretty good then and how far away that seems! How much farther away, then, was the period in which Sid's basic experiences took place—the 1930s, when he was on the front line of the struggle to organize labor.*

Because I come from that part of the working class which holds fiercely to the illusion of being middle class, (our parents set off for work with jacket, tie, and white collar) I was slow to understand labor. (And I'm still learning.) The special thing about Sid Lens was that he did what most of us fail to do—he made genuine links between one movement and another. An independent socialist who was sharply critical of the U.S. Communist Party, he also knew that anti-Communism was the greater danger, that trade unions in America would lose if strong leadership could be destroyed by red-baiting. The links he made were not abstract but real. He opposed racism for the most concrete of reasons—it divided the working class and made it possible for business to bust strikes and smash unions. Sid was a revolutionist always on the watch for the revolution—something one finds in every piece collected here.

Some may see these pieces as pages from a past well behind us. But despite automation and computers, we still have a working class (more of it in white collars) and now we have an underclass as well—a group of poor who will never, under our capitalist system, see any light in the dark tunnel of their lives. As this is written in August of 1987 the unemployment rate has fallen lower than usual but at the same time the gap between rich and poor is the greatest it has ever been, and most of the new areas of employment are in service industries where the pay is low. The number of poor continues to increase.

Sid Lens reminded us that the issue is power—an issue pacifists avoid discussing as Victorians avoided talking about sex. Power was never, in Sid's mind, an issue of how the oppressed could gain power over

coming—we lost three or four strikes because other unions wouldn't back us—and when it was, personal friendship or union politics often played a greater role than working-class solidarity.

* * *

In the late 1940s, I headed a drive by two national unions to organize a Chicago retail chain that included ten large stores. The workers responded enthusiastically, and soon we were ready to file an application with the National Labor Relations Board for a union certification election. At that point, however, the employer fired more than 100 of our most active recruits, leaving us no choice but to strike.

The two national unions were conservative bastions of the American Federation of Labor with close ties to the Teamsters, so we were confident we could shut down the stores and compel management to rehire the dismissed union activists. It didn't work out that way; after respecting our picket lines for three-and-a-half hours, the Teamsters called to say they would have to go through. Without the Teamsters' support, our strike soon collapsed. The chain remains unorganized to this day, and tens of thousands of other retail workers who would have benefited from our struggle remain outside the ranks of union labor.

Some unions fail to respect a picket line because they are led by business unionists who have no concept of working-class solidarity. Some unions have been intimidated by the threat of civil lawsuit, or fear criminal prosecution for observing a picket line. The Taft-Hartley Act's ban on "secondary boycotts" has been particularly effective. During the recent strike of Greyhound bus drivers, one major national union contributed $50,000 to the drivers' strike fund but directed its members to cross

I'm sure many other young people, in and out of the peace movement, would not have followed her example. But it seems to me that in recent years I have met many more who wouldn't think twice about crossing a union picket line. The old rule seems to have lost much of its force. Why?

Prosperity is one factor, I suppose. Many workers now earn middle-class or even upper-class incomes. When a $15-an-hour construction worker or a $75,000-a-year airline pilot goes on strike, a $4-an-hour clerk is more likely to be jealous than sympathetic. It was different in the 1920s and 1930s, the years of economic stagnation and open-shop repression, when we were all in the same leaky boat.

The waves of European immigrants also helped promote and protect the sanctity of the picket line. There were strong traditions of working-class solidarity among many of the newcomers—particularly the Jews, Germans, and Irish. Children brought up in such homes learned early in life to stay on this side of the picket line.

What mattered most, however, was a sense of solidarity within the house of labor itself and a moral vision that friends and sympathizers could readily embrace. Both the sense of solidarity and the moral vision have fallen on hard times lately. It isn't easy to work up much comradely fervor for Jackie Presser of the Teamsters, who earns more than half a million dollars a year and is an admitted informer for the FBI. It isn't easy to make common cause with striking airline pilots who didn't hesitate to cross the picket lines of flight attendants and machinists when *they* were out on strike.

From my own years in the labor movement, I can recall a dozen occasions when I had to plead with union leaders to respect our picket lines. Such support was not always forth-

others, but how they might take power back into their own hands. And doing this required cooperation, solidarity, not the mindless search for "personal empowerment." For Sid, none were free until all were free, no one's wholeness and humanity could be real in a world of gross inequality and injustice. For Sid this struggle meant a very precise target—how to take power from the tiny minority of the capitalist class that now has it and diffuse that power instead to the great majority of Americans. At the very least this required political struggle—and a political voice for labor.

Times change and the percentage of families working on farms has dropped, just as basic manual labor has dropped as a percentage of the work force. But those who are powerless have not decreased. And what we need now—what Sid fought for with his last breath—is an authentic movement of radical social and economic change.

Finally, we need to continue what Sid Lens says in the essay from The Crisis of American Labor. *He wrote "If American workers can be fired with an 'insurgent impulse' at all, it is only over such vital issues as peace, full employment, civil rights, welfare legislation. A ten-cents-an-hour wage increase is meaningless if hydrogen bombs begin to fall on Detroit or Chicago." His appeal is one of the hardest for "middle class radicals" to understand (which is to say I have the same problem some of you may be having). He felt pacifists had to understand the economic realities of why working people did certain things, and not preach abstract morality. Yet even as we needed to understand why, in our economy workers take jobs in military plants, we should*

never lose sight of the fact that workers are ***at least as able as any other sector of society to respond when moral issues are raised.*** *Unions, if one looks at them closely, did not come into existence primarily to raise wages—they came into existence because they gave to workers a sense of worth and dignity.*

Sid Lens was a prophet, and not without honor. The A.J. Muste Memorial Institute, with which Sid Lens was closely identified, is delighted to reprint these essays and to call attention to but a small sample of Lens' work, which will prove of enormous value to those seeking information about the labor and radical movement from the 1930s through to our time.

—David McReynolds
1987

David McReynolds is a member of the Board of Directors of the A.J. Muste Institute, the Chair of War Resisters International and a staff member of the War Resisters League. In 1980 he was the presidential candidate of the Socialist Party, and has been a writer and public speaker on peace and social justice issues for thirty years.

The A.J. Muste Memorial Institute offers its thanks to Shirley Lens and Erwin Knoll for their help with the production of this pamphlet.

times killed. Honoring a picket line was the least we could do.

It still is. Observing the rule never to cross a labor picket line is, it seems to me, as important now as it was a couple of generations ago—a minimal show of solidarity with those who are struggling to achieve a better life or a better world. And the rule should allow no exceptions; our observance must be uniform, not selective. It's a matter of principle, of social philosophy. Whether we admire a particular union or a particular strike is beside the point; the *cause* is just and deserves our support.

* * *

During the years of protest against U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, I once arranged a television appearance for a young woman, a dedicated peace activist. At the entrance to the station, we encountered a picket line of striking technicians. "Too bad," I said to my young friend. "This is one TV show we'll have to miss." And I started to walk away.

But she refused to leave with me. "Like hell I'll miss this show," she said. "Those union bastards are our enemies." She cited a recent incident: In New York City, a group of construction workers—hard hats—had assaulted antiwar demonstrators. "Why should I care about them?" she asked.

I argued that the tactics the Government was using against us in the peace movement—arrests, injunctions, official and unofficial violence—had been used for generations against the labor movement. I tried to instill in her a sense of solidarity, a feeling for fellow human beings who were also underdogs, who were also attempting to right societal wrongs. It was all in vain. She walked through the picket line and taped the broadcast.

Hold That Line

Time was when working men and women, liberals and radicals of all persuasions, held one rule sacred and inviolable: Never cross a picket line. It wasn't a precept that required discussion or debate. It made no difference which union was on strike, or what it was demanding. Good people didn't cross picket lines. Ever.

Once we learned that rule, we stayed with it. Our politics might have changed, or we might have drifted away from activism, but the picket line remained sacrosanct. Honoring a picket line was a matter of principle, and the principle was absolute and immutable.

Not long ago, I asked a wealthy friend why he continues to respect picket lines that are clearly at odds with his class interests. "I don't know," he replied. "I guess it's because I was brought up that way. My father was a member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. . . ."

That's how it was with many millions of us. We or our parents or our grandparents had taken part in the needle-trade strikes, the steel and coal battles, the hard-rock mine struggles, the sit-down strikes in the auto and rubber industries, the bitter confrontations with police or national guardsmen in Minneapolis, Toledo, San Francisco. And even if we or our families were not directly involved, we had heard and read about pickets being beaten, jailed, some-

The Radical Heritage

I

Three major events fashioned the United States from thirteen divided and separate colonies into a modern industrial nation. At each of these historical turning points the country was at an impasse, doomed to stagnation if it failed to remove the historical roadblock, or ready to unleash great momentum, if it did. It seems to be inherent in the progress of nations that they must either meet these challenges head-on or lapse into suspended animation. Our twenty Latin-American neighbors are an excellent, though tragic, illustration of what happens when inner social contradictions are not resolved. Had the great dreamer of Latin-American unity, Simon Bolivar, been successful in welding the nations freed from Spanish and Portuguese tyranny into one, or a few, viable nations, they too might have experienced substantial growth. As it was, they remained saddled with much of the feudal past — backward, poor, hungry, illiterate. And most of their labor movements, in harmony with stagnant or slow-moving economies, have remained either state-dominated and impotent as under Rafael Trujillo, Fulgencio Batista, Getulio Vargas, Juan Peron, Perez Jiminez; or become revolutionary as in Bolivia.

The United States has been more fortunate. As a result of the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the New Deal under Franklin Roosevelt, it has swept aside social impediments to make progress possible. Without these, it would never have pushed beyond the Mississippi, nor united into one coast-to-coast nation, nor established what has been called the American standard of living. Nor would it have laid the groundwork for the kind of labor movement we now have.

At the time of the American Revolution the thirteen colonies had reached a dead end; they could only mark time unless they removed the social and economic shackles of British rule. Under British policy the colonies were expected to produce cotton, tobacco, and other materials, ship them to England in British bottoms, and purchase finished goods from the mother country in return. They were not to manufacture on their own, except in limited amounts and under special permit. During the seventeenth century there were only eight iron centers in the whole land, none of them employing more than five workers. Parliament disallowed laws to aid American industry on the grounds that it would "interfere with the manufacture of this kingdom [and] has always been thought improper." Restrictions on settling the public domain confined the colonies and their expanding population to the East Coast; the British wanted their subject peoples concentrated into a relatively small area where they could be more easily controlled.

Economic life too—following European feudal and semifeudal patterns—was often highly restrictive. Tenants had to sign compacts with their landlords not to trade anywhere but at the landlords' stores, to grind flour at their mills, to buy bread at their bakeries, lumber at their sawmills, and spirits at their stills. Many landlords were so powerthinking in old terms, and conceiving of small changes, would be a catastrophic blunder. A new vision is needed. Nothing less will suffice.

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with big business for control of the state—but that can not be done through the pro-business Democratic Party.

Keynesian economics, the play book of America's economy for four decades, ran out of steam in 1971—just as "free enterprise" and "rugged individualism" ran out of steam in 1929. Today, our nation needs a planned economy; social ownership of such basic industries as banking, insurance, and energy; a redistribution of income, and a reorientation of society away from militarism. These objectives can not be achieved through an alliance with "good" businesspeople *within* the Democratic Party. Labor must begin thinking of itself as the fulcrum of a new and different kind of political party—a coalition that would include the antiwar movement, the women's movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the civil rights movement, the Native American movement, and similar forces that share a commitment to basic social change.

As this process unfolds, much can be done to build an independent political base for labor. Unions could begin electing stewards, just as they now select shop stewards, to handle community and local grievances—transit fares, housing code enforcement, red-lining, and the like. The forging of local coalitions should be vigorously pursued, until the nation is dotted with action groups for every conceivable progressive purpose. Such coalitions at the grass roots could be the backbone of the new party.

Americans are accustomed to thinking in terms of "continuum"—what existed yesterday will go on tomorrow, with minor improvements. We have grown apprehensive of quantum jumps, though our history is filled with them—the American Revolution, the Civil War and Reconstruction, the New Deal. Today, we face a quantum jump. For labor to continue

fully placed they had their own insignia and flags. Their domains were fortified, armed with cannon, protected by paid mercenaries; and the tenant was like a chattel.

Wage workers were then few in number. Frequently they worked only in the off season, between crops. Those who did work all year around were usually bound to their jobs for a period of time—a year, for instance—prohibited from quitting, and limited to wages no higher than those prescribed by law. The Massachusetts Bay Colony proclaimed in 1633 that "carpenters, sawyers, masons, bricklayers, tilers, joiners, wheelwrights, movers and other workmen were not to receive more than two shillings a day, each paying his own board." On a number of occasions during the year a wage earner in some colonies might be required to work on public projects, and in others he had to help with the harvest. Economic life was rigid, inflexible, and centralized. Rapid industrial growth in such a social climate was impossible. And so were labor unions.

A group of fishermen off the coast of Maine were reported in a "mutiny" in 1636 when their wages were held back. In 1667, cartmen in New York refused to move dirt from the streets for the pay of threepence a load. In 1741, in the same city, bakers, in order to protect their price level, refused to bake bread. But these were episodic and spontaneous efforts by small entrepreneurs rather than wage workers, and uncoordinated through any union. For the first 187 years—or more than half of American history—there were no true labor unions. Our forefathers were not pacifistic men who suffered the whip without fighting. Life in the colonies was hard, and the frontiersman, the Negro slave, and the white indentured servant struck back frequently. There were revolts of the backwoodsmen such as that of Nathaniel Bacon of Virginia in 1676, John Culpepper of

Baltimore in 1689, Leisler in New York the same year, and others. There were scores of uprisings by indentured servants and harassed Negroes. These were "all-or-nothing" struggles, in which the price of defeat was sometimes death. But the instrument of partial revolt, the labor union, was impossible when there was so little manufacture, few wage earners, and no true political democracy.

II

The American Revolution resolved this impasse. After the victory of Washington's tattered army it was possible for the United States to evolve — hesitantly, it is true, but inexorably — along capitalist lines. The strictures on industry and trade were removed. Enterprise became free and businessmen "equal before the law," no longer restricted by guilds which prescribed prices and quality. The laborer was freed from bondage. He no longer was bound to his job for a specific period; he could quit when he wanted to and work where he pleased without being termed a vagrant. The Revolution changed the face of America. Labor-saving machines, carefully hoarded by Britain and France, were smuggled in from overseas, and a modest manufacturing industry arose side by side with the more bountiful commerce. The nation remained predominantly agricultural, but it was on its way toward industrialism.

In the wake of these developments, the first unions were minor and flimsy affairs. Workers agreed amongst themselves in secret meetings, usually under oath, to work only for established wage rates, and to assist their fellow workers when necessary. When there was a "turnout" — a strike — the men merely stayed home,

gence of the conglomerate obviously blunted the strike weapon on which labor had depended since 1886.

The multinationals have had a similar effect. To match power with management of a company that earns half of its profits abroad, a union must enroll workers in the company's overseas subsidiaries as well as in most of its domestic operations. National unions do belong to international federations, but these have yet to become instruments for concerted economic action.

The point is that labor must rethink its structure. The center of power within the movement until the 1880s was the city central body; since then it has been the national (usually called international) union of employes in the same craft or industry. Today, a new structure must be devised, one conducive to the efforts of a conglomerate's employes to take unified action on a company-wide basis. And some mechanism must be established to coordinate joint strikes with unions overseas.

5. We have moved from the laissez-faire capitalism of the 1920s to "controlled" capitalism after 1933, and now to state-managed capitalism. Government now makes major decisions affecting workers. If it raises interest rates, thousands in the construction industry are laid off. If it sets wage guidelines of 7 or 9 per cent, it can compel unions — under present circumstances — to accept such guidelines. If it tightens National Labor Relations Board rules, it makes it more difficult for unions to organize and negotiate. If it wages war in Vietnam or elsewhere, it rearranges all national priorities. And if it increases the military budget, it fuels inflation.

What all of this means to labor is that independent political action must become the first order of union activity. Labor must vie

strations, even in coalitions with the unemployed.

It took two or three years after the outset of the Great Depression for radical unionists to begin leading the "labor wars" that changed the character of American society. By 1933, six times as many workers were out on strike as had been in 1930. Half a century later, we may be in the calm before a new and powerful storm.

Labor's inability to organize the unorganized, to win social reforms, and to arrest a decline in real wages must be considered in the broader context of two other problems that bear on our ability to formulate a strategy for the 1980s:

4. The structure of capitalism has changed drastically since the 1930s. The CIO introduced industrial unionism into the mass production industries so that it could keep watch on the economic power of the corporate titans of the day. A union of auto workers was strong enough to immobilize General Motors, and a union of communication workers could challenge International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT). But there has been a vast expansion of the reach—and appetite—of conglomerates and multinational corporations; an industrial union can no longer match the economic power of these new giants.

ITT illustrates the point: In 1961, its operations were almost exclusively in the telecommunications industry; a decade later, it had not only quadrupled its assets but had taken over a hundred subsidiaries in industries varying from hotels (Sheraton) to baking (Wonder Bread). Only one-sixth of its investment remained in telecommunications. The company dealt with fifteen national unions and scores of locals, none capable by itself of significantly impairing operations by going out on strike. The emer-

without bothering to establish picket lines, until their demands were met. Sometimes they put a notice in a newspaper, putting forth their position as against that of the employers, seeking to win public support. Periodically, in line with the then prevailing common law in Britain, such groupings were prosecuted as illegal "conspiracies," and disappeared from the scene—only to reappear again some time later. The first union, that of the Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers (shoemakers), established in Philadelphia in 1794, lasted but twelve years. Except for those of the printers and shoemakers there were no continuous organizations until the 1820's. The word, *union,* itself, was not used until 1825, when we first hear of a "mailers' union" and a "weavers' union."

These original, rudimentary organizations had to be craft unions in structure because manufacture was primitive. Division of labor was rare; the man at the workbench made the whole product from beginning to end. The unions then were also unstable and ephemeral; first, because there still existed strong ties between the worker and the employer, who himself was only one hairsbreadth removed from journeyman status, and secondly, because the amount of money needed to open a new business was insignificant. It was so small, in fact, that after losing a strike journeymen frequently united to compete with their former bosses. In 1806, following their conviction for conspiracy" to organize, the shoemakers of Philadelphia opened their own warehouse. Journeymen often united for a single venture—say, to publish a book—and then returned to the workbench for their employers.

The first unions were primitive, uncertain of their future, unclear as to their direction. But once they had caught their breath and begun to coalesce into city central bodies, they became

highly political and radical. The Workingmen's party in New York in 1829 polled 6,000 votes of a total of 21,000, probably a higher percentage than labor has ever polled since, as an independent political force.

One newspaper commenting on labor's agitation in 1830 said: "We discern symptoms of a revolution, which will be second to none save that of '76." At least fifty labor newspapers were founded in this period. According to historian Mary Beard, "political organizations along the old, familiar lines of county and ward committees and conventions were established; and radical agitators demanding revolutionary changes came to the front."

Equality was the byword of these movements. They demanded equal ownership of property, equal citizenship, equal opportunities for education through a free public-school system, abolition of imprisonment for debt, abolition of the militia system, and similar reforms. The New York Workingmen's party stated that "all human society, our own included as well as every other, is constructed radically wrong." It opposed both private ownership of land and inheritance of wealth. Other radical reformers such as Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright proposed the formation of cooperative communities as a means of by-passing the evils of private property.

This was long before the day of Marx and Engels or the British Labour party, yet there is no mistaking the socialist flavor of American labor in its formative period. The words of the Working Men's Republican Political Association of Penn Township, Pennsylvania, sound like a foretaste of the *Communist Manifesto:* "There appear to exist two distinct classes, the rich and the poor; the oppressed and the oppressor; those that live by their own labor and they that live by the labor of others; the aristo-

In a choice between what is legally permissible and what is morally correct, the movement of the 1930s chose the morally correct—and made its greatest strides. The auto workers who occupied General Motors property in 1936 and 1937 were obviously breaking the law—but if it had not been for the sit-down strikes, the CIO would not have flourished, nor would the movement have attained its present dimensions. The sit-down strikes were acts of civil disobedience in the face of a gross injustice—the denial by business and government of the workers' right to bargain collectively. They were just as morally sound as Martin Luther King's marches for civil rights.

The Taft-Hartley Act, the Landrum-Griffin Act, and other anti-labor laws have cut into union solidarity by prohibiting such practices as "secondary boycotts." But union officials who now draw high salaries for their soft, safe jobs are no longer inclined to challenge unjust laws by refusing to obey them. Having won job and financial security, they protect their prerogatives by clinging to moderate policies and dampening the militancy of the rank and file.

But this state of affairs won't last forever. A mood of desperation is already building in the rank and file, and it evokes the mood that sparked the labor revolt of the 1930s — especially as real wages decline.

Some months ago, I spoke at a conference of some 600 local union stewards, shop committee members, and dissidents in revolt against their organizations. The level of political discourse was higher than any I've heard in the labor movement for many years. It was evident that growing numbers of unionists are willing to build coalitions with groups—even radical groups—outside the labor movement, joining in energy coalitions, in antiwar demon-

cellor, Otto von Bismarck, American unionists are still far from achieving that goal.

3. In real dollars, workers' living standards have been declining recently for the first time in four decades. After a steady rise, in good times and in bad since 1938, the trend was reversed in 1979, 1980, and 1981; the decline will certainly continue in 1982 and, perhaps, for years to come. We are in the midst of a Government-managed depression in which President Carter forced real wages down by decreeing "voluntary" wage guidelines that fell short by 5 per cent of meeting price increases in the past three years. President Reagan has created an adverse climate for wage improvements by the sharpest attack on the poor in a half century. Moreover, there is an increasing tendency on the part of management to demand "give-backs" — the surrender of wages or benefits previously won by labor.

There is a partial solution to these reverses: a return to the principles of solidarity and militance. A certain degree of solidarity still distinguishes the labor movement — teamsters, for example, usually (but not always) respect the picket lines of other organizations. But it is a limited solidarity that stops at the borderline of illegality. Clothing workers could have added to the pressure on J.P. Stevens — and perhaps forced the company to yield — by refusing to weave its cloth, but that would have been against the law. It is unlikely that the rest of labor's leadership would have supported officials of the clothing workers' union who engaged in such a boycott. The steel workers could have shortened the recent coal strike, or prevented it, by announcing they would not handle scab coal. And the auto workers could have helped the rubber workers to victory during the tire strike a few years ago by refusing to put scab tires on new cars. But it is no longer labor's style to violate repressive laws.

cratic and the democratic; the despotic and republican, who are in direct opposition to one another in their objects and pursuits. . . ."

When the second French Revolution took place in 1830, a line of unionists three miles long marched in a parade in New York City as an enthusiastic endorsement of the aims of that revolution.

The flair for independent labor parties lasted only a few years, but even after their disappearance labor continued to agitate for cooperation, free land, and other panaceas. Some unions set up self-employing workshops, the profits of which were to be equally divided among the men themselves. The Journeymen Molders' Union established a foundry near Cincinnati, and the Tailors' and Shirt Sewers formed similar producers' cooperatives. Though none of these prospered for long, American labor in the first half of the nineteenth century came back to cooperation time and again as a means out of its dilemma. Utopian reforms, cooperation, and various other nostrums were more in the forefront of labor's thinking than simple wage-and-hour issues. Before the Civil War the demand for free land became insistent. Labor sought for such panaceas because it had no faith, as yet, in either the stability or justice of the capitalist system.

Union conventions listened attentively to the great radicals of the day: Horace Greeley, George Ripley, Albert Brisbane, Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Charles A. Dana, William H. Channing, Robert Owen, and many others.

From 1790 to 1845 one million immigrants came to America, and in the following decade anothe three million. The frustrated revolutionaries of nineteenth-century Europe fled to the United States, and here continued their

radical preachings, built unions and cooperatives, and agitated for free land and agrarian reform. The line of demarcation between unionism and socialist politics or panaceas was quite thin.

An unstable capitalism produced a radical labor movement, more radical than that of any other in the world at that time.

In structure too, the tenuous unionism followed closely the limits laid down for it by early capitalism. In 1800, it still took two weeks—sixteen hours a day of hard riding by stage coach—to reach Indiana from New York. It took six weeks to reach St. Louis. Under such circumstances neither capital nor labor could be highly integrated. Local unions tended to group into city-central bodies, and did not try to form national craft organizations. For the better part of a century these city bodies — composed of unions of different crafts in a single city—were to be the power center of the movement.

When the National Trades' Union was organized in 1834 it consisted of seven city bodies — not a single national craft union. The city bodies did the organizing of new workers, coordinated strike action, engaged in politics. Their leaders, like those of the local unions themselves, were usually men who worked at the bench in the daytime and conducted their union activity in spare moments, nights and weekends, without pay, and with little glory. Such a unionism could only be idealistic, and unsullied by the ills of bigness that were to plague not only labor but the rest of our society later on.

The emasculation of these city-central bodies toward the end of the nineteenth century, and their reduction to minor legislative roles today, lowered the curtain on a proud period in labor's history. Union protagonists

An agenda for a new, radical labor movement will have to come to grips with some basic realities that often escape our attention, though they are of urgent concern. Here are five critical factors I would place at the top of the list:

1. Labor long ago stopped "organizing the unorganized." Granted, a few members, a few shops, a few locals are added here and there from time to time, and there is still an occasional — though rare—victory like the one over J.P. Stevens. But unions now lose half or more of the National Labor Relations Board representation elections, and they are not penetrating new fields with any vigor. The South remains unorganized, as do such holdout industries as textiles and chemicals.

To make matters worse, the three big unions that gave the CIO its thrust in the 1930s are in crisis. The coal miners' union now covers only half its jurisdiction; more and more coal is dug in non-union Western strip mines. The auto workers' union—vanguard of the 1930s — is shrinking as the industry reels under the impact of foreign competition, and will lose even more members in the era of the "world car." The steel workers' union is slumping, too, in basic steel and in fabricating plants. Even the construction trades unions, the bastion of the AFL not too long ago, are effectively being challenged by such non-union forces as the Committee for a Union-Free Environment. And the teamsters' union, America's largest labor organization, is held at bay by large companies such as Overnite and Viking, which have successfully resisted unionization.

2. Labor has won no major social reform in a dozen years—not even a procedural reform of National Labor Relations Board rules. A full century after the German working class gained national health insurance under the Iron Chan-

Heavy Lifting: Five Not So Easy Pieces for the Unions

If there is a shift to the Right in the United States today, as the mass media and most major party politicians insist, there is also a countervailing trend—a shift to the Left. Last spring's surge of opposition to U.S. intervention in El Salvador was more vigorous than anything we witnessed at a comparable time in the Vietnam era. The Solidarity Day march on Washington was the most massive demonstration in recent labor history. Even the Catholic hierarchy has begun to challenge the arms race.

What we are witnessing is not a simple swing in one direction but a polarization—a drawing of the lines that will ultimately lead to a decisive confrontation between Right and Left. And the force most likely to tip the scales in that confrontation will be the labor movement.

Despite the conservative, lackluster leadership of today's unions, thousands of secondary local officials—young shop stewards, labor educators, and general dissidents—are waiting in the wings to forge a new and more radical leadership. They will be tomorrow's successors to Bob Travis, Roy Reuther, Harry Bridges, Farrell Dobbs, Genora Johnson—the people who brought the movement to life in the 1930s. They need only the historical insight that will help them formulate a strategy for the 1980s.

can be permitted a moment of nostalgia for this "little" labor movement which no longer exists, nor can ever exist again, but which, while it lasted, was free of the specific problems that bedevil the labor movement today when by force of circumstances it has been separated a few notches farther from the rank and file.

III

The second major turning point in American history was the Civil War.

In the American saga this was, both for industry and labor, the bridge between 'littleness" and "bigness." Ostensibly the most dramatic issue in the war between the states was the freedom of the Negro slave. But at bottom, what was at stake was America's future as an industrial nation, capable not only of competing with, but outstripping Europe. In the thirty-five years following this bloody intramural conflict, production was increased by almost five, railroads by almost seven, times. From 1859 to 1899, the number of industrial plants tripled, the number of wage earners quadrupled, the value of commodities increased by seven times, and the amount of invested capital skyrocketed to nine times its former level. In the same period in England the value of products inched up by only 50 per cent, in France 45 per cent, and in Germany, then making the most rapid progress of all Europe, by a mere 65 per cent. Favored by its geographic position, safely wedged in between two oceans and militarily impregnable, blessed with unbelievable material wealth discovered in the West and the human wealth of millions of new immigrants, the United States grew far more rapidly than the atomized, hemmed-in, warring nations of Europe.

But none of this American advance could have been achieved if King Cotton in the South had not first been subdued. King Cotton was the halter around America's neck, preventing a mercantile nation from becoming an industrial one. The kind of America it sought was radically different from the kind of America sought by an industry-conscious North; and had it maintained its political grip on Congress and the administration as in previous decades, it would have been fatal both for industry—and labor.

King Cotton, after the invention of the cotton gin, needed new land to the North and West to replace the rapidly exhausted and poorly utilized land in the South. By wile and guile, therefore, it opposed the opening of the public domain to the free farmer and pioneer for fear they might pre-empt lands the South too wanted. It opposed state expenditure for roads, canals and other improvements which might benefit the capitalists to the North, but would only impose additional taxes on Southern Bourbons. It saw little sense in high tariffs to protect infant industries because its own *modus operandi* was based on selling cotton to England in exchange for cheaper goods from a more mature British industry. What the North wanted in high tariffs, new roads, subsidies to railroads, the South could not grant except at its own expense. The conflict therefore was "irrepressible" and the victory of the North indispensable if America were to be converted to giant industry, corporate management, and coast-to-coast abundance.

The Civil War, catastrophic as it was to both North and South, was from a historical point of view a vitalizing event. It did not bring the Negro slave full freedom nor did it obliterate all vestiges of Bourbonism in the South; but it did open more free land to the West for anxious pioneers, it did push the "iron horse" of big business grew. And in the absence of strong countervailing pressures by the most important potential dissident force, the drift to the Right—under liberals and conservative Presidents alike—gathered momentum.

Meany's retirement offers the movement an opportunity to reassess its role—to look in the mirror and see how badly its face has been battered by business unionism. His departure should, at the very least, relax some of the rigidity that has been the rule in the higher levels of the AFL-CIO. Perhaps the leaders of labor will begin to look at "new" ideas—the old ideas they have long neglected—such as creation of a labor party, or joining with William Winpisinger of the Machinists' Union in forging coalitions with other forces on the Left. Perhaps they will even reappraise their allegiance to the arms race and nuclear power.

Many things are possible, especially as the rank-and-file membership experiences the ravages of our irrational economy. It is time for labor to revive the spirit of the stalwarts who led it, almost half a century ago, to its greatest growth and strength.

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But because today's unions fear costly law suits, the rubber workers were denied that kind of clout—and tens of millions of unorganized men and women have even less. Their chances of being unionized are small without labor idealism and solidarity—two qualities that George Meany did not encourage.

For the twenty million or so who do carry union cards, unionism has slowly been drained of passion and zeal; it has become a slot-machine phenomenon—you put your $8 or $10 a month into the slot, and out comes a 6 per cent or 10 per cent raise every year. It is no longer a cause but an arrangement, like an insurance policy. Reuther realized in 1955 that it was necessary to "unionize" those already in unions—to educate them on basic labor issues and strengthen their allegiance to the cause. To a small extent, this is being done in the UAW, the Machinists' Union, and a few others. But the general level of union—and class—consciousness continues to decline.

* * *

In 1955, when the AFL and CIO reunited, Mike Quill of the Transport Workers Union warned that "this is not a merger with honor. We are going *into* the AFL." He believed that the CIO was being liquidated organizationally and ideologically, submerging into an older federation that tolerated racketeering, racial discrimination, and backdoor contracts. AFL officials, he warned, would not become more militant; instead, CIO officials would become less so.

History has proven Quill was right. Labor made greater progress and exerted far more influence when it was divided, its two branches competing, than when it united under Meany's business-union leadership. Under his guiding hand, the power of labor shrank and the power

and highways inexorably westward, and it did give nascent American industry the tariff protection, the mass markets, and the subsidies it needed to bloom and flourish. As one of its side effects it also plowed the field for the simple, "business" unionism, that was a special American brand—unknown elsewhere.

Few people, either in industry or labor, understood the long-term implications of the Civil War at the time. Employers, for at least two decades, continued their frontal attacks on the labor movement, smashed scores of strikes, and forced many unions out of business, particularly during the depression of 1873-1878. Jay Gould, the railroad tycoon, typified the more harsh and perhaps prevailing management attitude when he said: "I can hire one-half of the working class to kill the other half." Class lines were drawn taut; hundreds died in the struggles between the Molly Maguires—a secret organization of coal miners—and the coal operators, in the railroad strikes of 1877, the Haymarket Riot in Chicago in 1886, and other disorders.

For their part, union leaders had little faith in the new capitalism or little hope of advancing the cause of the workingman within its framework. Most of them de-emphasized the simple bread-and-butter approach in favor of panaceas, "uplift," and socialism. The socialist content of unionism remained more important for many key union leaders than the wage-and-hour demands.

William H. Sylvis, one of the great unionists of this era and the architect of the first federation organized after the Civil War, the National Labor Union, believed that formation of producers' cooperatives would eventually undermine the capitalist way of life. "We must adopt a system," he said, "which will divide the profits of labor among those who produce

them." Disillusioned with simple union objectives after his Molders' Union—the most important union of this period— was defeated in a strike, he organized the Troy Cooperative Iron Founders' Association. This approach had considerable appeal and was followed by many other unions—Bakers, Coal Miners, Printers, Machinists, Shipwrights, Shoemakers. It seemed like a simple answer: why let the employers pocket the profit sweated out of the workers' hides, when the workers could and should have it all to themselves? The amount of capital needed for business ventures was still not prohibitive; the program of producers' cooperatives was thus more attractive than that of striking for higher wages.

The International Labor Union, formed in 1878 by socialists and anarcho-syndicalists, attacked the problem in a different way, but all to the same end: the abolition of capitalism. The leaders of this group, Parsons, Schilling, Wedemeyer, Sorge, called for such an increase in wages "until wages represent the earnings and not the necessities of labor; thus melting profit upon labor out of existence, and making cooperation, self-employed labor, the natural and logical step from wage slavery to free labor."

Cooperation and uplift were also the theme of the successful Knights of Labor, which grew by 1886 to 700,000 members. The Knights spoke of "harmonizing the interests of capital and labor," and had little faith in strikes or in the struggle for wage increases and shorter hours. Terrence Powderly, the vain, platitudinous "Grand Master Workman" of the Knights, refused to endorse the eight-hour-day movement in 1886 (one of the reasons for the decline of his organization) on the grounds that such gains were illusory. The end goal, he said, must be to abolish the wage system itself through cooperation, not to try to improve the system.

organizers. But if it wasn't all Meany's fault, his dominance over the AFL-CIO made it difficult to reverse the slide into conformity and accommodation. He would not tolerate leftists, and he would not conceive of working outside the system.

The movement needed more militancy of the kind that had guided it in the 1930s, but it had less. The mass production workers in auto, steel, and other major industries who had "primary" economic power—they could shut down their plants without help from other unions—were safely in the fold. The millions who remained to be organized were mostly those with "secondary" economic power—unable to strike effectively without outside support. When twenty maids in a motel or forty waiters in a restaurant go out on strike, they can swiftly be replaced. When workers at a single store in such a chain as Sears or Montgomery Ward or Woolworth's hit the bricks, they affect the company's total profits so little that they are hardly missed.

Workers with "secondary" power can unionize and win strikes only when they have the help of others. They can win if truckdrivers refuse to make deliveries, or if fellow workers in feeder industries refuse to process their employers' products, or if large numbers of unionists join the picket lines to keep scabs or customers from crossing.

But that kind of solidarity sometimes requires flouting the law. Under Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin, for instance, it is illegal to engage in a "secondary boycott." A couple of years ago, during the long strike of rubber workers, the union was able to shut down only part of the industry. Had the strikers shut it all down, or convinced transportation unions not to make deliveries, or prevailed on the UAW to refuse to mount "scab" tires on new cars, they might have won a quick and decisive victory.

hungry because workers could not earn a living wage.

In choosing between the niceties of the law and the realities of life, the radicals of the 1930s came down on the side of the realities. They paid an enormous price—scores were killed on the picket lines, thousands wounded, thousands moire jailed. Many were blacklisted so that they could not find work. But they accepted a lesson deeply rooted in American history—one that the Mollie Maguires and the Pullman strikers and the Wobblies had learned decades before, and that Martin Luther King Jr. and the anti-war movement would learn decades later—that social progress is usually achieved by defying the system, not by working within it.

When Meany assumed the leadership of the AFL-CIO in December 1955, the united federation chose a UAW vice president, John Livingston, to head a major organizing drive, and Reuther pledged $4 million to the campaign from the unions that had formerly constituted the CIO. But the drive quickly aborted. It lacked the leadership and militancy that the leftists had imparted to organizing in the 1930s. Livingston's functionaries were not as ready to resist the sheriffs, the national guard, and the courts. There was no way to break into the Southern textile mills or the service industries without that kind of militancy.

It wasn't all Meany's fault, of course. In the years since the 1930s, American workers had improved their lot considerably. They did not respond as quickly to a call to join another union's picket lines. The union leaders had also changed: Young radicals had become middle-aged liberals, secure in building treasuries and long-term contracts. In the late 1940s, succumbing to the Cold War virus, the CIO expelled eleven leftist-controlled unions, thereby cutting off a source of idealistic and energetic

Few people, either on labor's or management's side, seemed to foresee the day when some *modus vivendi* could be established, or when labor could be appeased within the context of capitalism.

America, then as today—though not in the same proportions—was a study in contrasts, big and little, rich and poor. "There are too many millionaires and too many paupers," cried the *Hartford Courant* in 1883. President Cleveland, in his message to Congress in December, 1888, spoke of "the existence of trusts, combinations and monopolies, while the citizen is struggling far in the rear or is trampled to death beneath an iron heel." Samuel Gompers complained in 1883 that wages were lower than in 1870. The United States Census of 1880 estimated per capita income at $300, whereas a decade earlier it was $400. Despite growing prosperity there was also great poverty; side by side with the concentration of capital into large aggregates, there was unemployment and wage slashing.

Under the circumstances it is quite understandable that many unionists could see little hope in the prevailing social system. For the most part they were fighting defensive battles to prevent wage cuts or to win wages back, once they were cut. Strikes were incredibly harsh affairs, and unions disappeared in depressed years as if into a squall. In the depression year of 1877, for instance, there were three million unemployed. Of the newly formed national craft unions, only twenty-two of thirty survived. Cigar makers lost four-fifths of their membership; New York's union roster fell by eight-ninths, from 44,000 to only 5,000. Textile strikers in Fall River, hitting back at wage cuts, lost two bitter strikes after almost a half year on the picket line. The 1877 railway strike, across the nation, reads almost like a revolution: twenty-six workers killed by troops in

Pittsburgh, thirteen killed in Reading, $5 million in car shops and other property set afire in one city, the workers in St. Louis so aroused that for two weeks they took over the city itself. Yet all the strikes of this period were beaten. In the midst of a mushrooming capitalism came depressions; and in the midst of depressions the labor movement suffered a severe setback.

But the setbacks of one decade were followed by insistent new efforts—and new setbacks—in the next. After the depressions of the 1870's the wheels of industry began to grind forward once more in the 1880's. The number of factories grew from 253,852 to 355,405, their capital from 2.8 to $6.5 billions. In a more prosperous period many strikes were won. Strikes against Jay Gould's railroad system were victorious, and in their wake labor added hundreds of thousands of members. But another strike, against the McCormick Harvester factory in Chicago, ended in the Haymarket Riot and the eventual hanging of four anarchist leaders. Now the offensive against labor mounted again. Thousands of unionists were blacklisted, many driven off company property at gun point. Committees that went in to discuss grievances with employers were as often as not told to leave the premises. Spies were introduced by the hundreds, and Pinkerton agents were used in large numbers both for espionage and to break strikes.

The mere assertion that this was a decade of great industrial growth does not accurately picture the turmoil and unevenness of this development, the heartache and tribulations of the millions of immigrants and native workers who sought security in the factories and railroads being built by the "robber barons." To such men industrial tyranny was real, and the theories of socialism and radicalism not unattractive. Did anyone really believe that the working exclusively within the system, as Meany demanded, but by being willing to work outside it. The men and women who built the United Auto Workers' membership from 30,000 to 400,000 in a single year, and the CIO from a million to four million in a couple of yers, were communists, socialists, Trotskyists — radicals of various persuasions.

It was the communists, for example, who—along with Roy Reuther, who was then a socialist—led the sitdown strikes at General Motors which, more than any other event, established the strength of the CIO. It was the communists who did the grass-roots organizing of the steelworkers and who built the unions of electrical workers, packinghouse workers, mine-mill workers, longshore workers, and many others. And it was the Trotskyist leadership of the 1934 Minneapolis truckers' strikes which made it possible for the teamsters' membership to grow from 95,000 to its present two million-plus.

What these radicals had in common—even when they fought each other—was a basic distrust of business and government. They knew, from fundamental theory and sad experience, that business would try to smash their unions, that the Government would help business, and that both had to be resisted if labor were to achieve its goal of organizing the unorganized. In the strikes they led, therefore, they put human rights before property rights. When they occupied General Motors, Chrysler, and hundreds of other plants during the sitdown strikes, they realized that their acts were illegal—but so long as government failed to force corporations to respect the right of workers to unionize, the interests of millions of laborers dictated that property rights had to be disregarded. Perhaps it was illegal to prevent a scab from crossing a picket line, but the greater crime was to let men, women, and children go

anchored in two concepts that were anathema to the young radicals who built the movement.

One was that labor and management had common long-range interests, and should therefore be able to come to terms with a minimum of confrontation. Just before the 1955 merger of the AFL and CIO, Meany wrote an article for *The New York Times* in which he suggested a "non-aggression pact" between unions and corporations—and this has been his orientation throughout his long career. He has never displayed any enthusiasm for strikes, the principal weapon in labor's arsenal. In fact, Meany says he has never participated in a strike or walked a picket line—a curious boast for a "labor" leader.

The second cornerstone of Meany's philosophy was a passionate hatred of communism. It was a hatred born in his Irish Catholic upbringing, but intensified by the hostility that conservative craft union officials harbored toward the New York leftists who preached industrial unionism and labor militancy. Meany has always felt that radicals (not just Stalinists) represented a greater threat to labor than did bosses. During World War II, even while the United States and the Soviet Union were allies, Meany joined with David Dubinsky and Matthew Woll to form the Free Trade Union Committee as a vehicle to fight communism in Europe, and after hostilities ended he and his associates joined with the CIA in dozens of illegal and unsavory activities—including strike-breaking—to fight "communism" and "neutralism" abroad.

The trouble with this sort of business unionism was that it did nothing either to "organize the unorganized" or, in Walter Reuther's famous phrase, to "unionize the organized." Labor had carved a base in the mass production and other industries during the 1930s not by

Vanderbilts and the Goulds could be "put in their place," made to yield wage increases of five cents and ten cents an hour without near-warfare? The facts seemed to belie it. Did anyone really think that the recurring depressions almost each decade could be stopped so long as the titans of industry were politically so powerful? A large segment of America, in addition to the labor movement, had no such confidence. This was the era when Populism was sinking roots amongst the farmers, when the West manifested deep hostility to the corporations of the East. Something more radical than "higher wages and shorter hours"—important in themselves—seemed on the social and political agenda. Producers' cooperatives lost their appeal as the years slipped by, but more mature forms of socialism gained stature with the laboring man, particularly in depression times.

In 1893 the United States experienced another depression, and in 1894, there came—again as a defensive measure against wage cuts—one of the most bitter strikes in American history, labeled in the press the "Debs Rebellion." Eugene V. Debs, a tall, kindly, humane railroad worker, later to become the leader and presidential standard bearer of the Socialist party, in 1893-1894 organized 150,000 men into the American Railway Union. Before the group could stabilize, however, it was confronted with its first—and last—major test.

The trouble started at Pullman in Illinois, where the maker of sleeping cars, George Pullman, ruled an empire strongly reminiscent of feudal days. His workers lived in Pullman tenements, paid him exorbitant rents, bought at his high-priced stores, sent their children to his school, attended his church, took relaxation in his theater or park, and lived a life completely circumscribed by the likes and dislikes of the "boss." Needless to say, Pullman was

capitalist in construction and other industries, and the skilled workers, making possible a policy of accommodation rather than attenuated and ceaseless class warfare. But this policy of accommodation evolved in the course of a number of decades; as a natural concomitant of rapid economic growth, it was part of no preconceived plan or conspiracy.

The men who formed the AFL in 1886 were not altogether simple unionists. Peter J. McGuire, who became its secretary and who headed the largest affiliate, the carpenters, was a lifelong and fiery socialist. Before he was twenty he had been in and through most of the radical groups on New York's East Side. He had helped found the Socialist Labor party and he remained socialism's friend within the AFL ranks until the beginning of the new century. Samuel Gompers, first president and architect of the AFL, belonged to no political party but he also originally considered himself a socialist and an advocate of the class struggle. "The man," he said, "who would accuse me or charge me with being an anti-Socialist says what he don't know anything about, he does not know Sam Gompers. I say here broadly and openly that there is not a noble hope that a Socialist may have that I do not hold as my ideal. There is not an inspiring and ennobling end that they are striving for that my heart does not beat in response to." In 1887, he defined his philosophy in concert "with most advanced thinkers" as the "abolition of the wage system." In contrast to the theories of the Knights of labor about the harmony of interests between labor and capital, Gompers insisted that "the interests of the employing class and the workers are not harmonious . . . the struggles of labor cannot be obviated in the future." The Federation itself proclaimed in its preamble that "a struggle is going on in all nations of the civilized world between the oppressors and the

frustrations of young people denied a voice in determining whether they would die on distant battlefields, so a New Left is bound to arise among union members denied a voice in their own organizations. The time is coming.

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It is against this condition of sluggishness and self-satisfaction that the Sadlowski challenge in the steelworkers' union must be evaluated. Sadlowski did not address himself to the broader problems with any depth, but they weighed in the balance. He fought his fight at the first rung of a tall ladder—the fossilized, undemocratic structure of his union. But implicit in his fight was the recognition that if the rank and file could regain its prerogatives and powers, young new leaders would soon be dealing with those broader problems.

Sadlowski's defeat reveals that only part of the work force is sufficiently concerned to take the first step toward revitalizing the labor movement. Older workers do not share the malaise, the sense of desperation that afflicts many younger workers. Nonetheless, the defeat is only a single battle in a larger war.

Sadlowski himself will probably remain one of the leaders of that war. His friend Jim Balanoff was elected director of District 31, and will almost certainly appoint his predecessor as assistant director. From that position Sadlowski will continue to consolidate his forces. Moreover, there are growing opposition elements in many key labor organizations—the United National Caucus among auto workers, the Professional Drivers Council (PROD) and Teamsters for a Democratic Union among teamsters, and local dissident groups such as a Spanish-speaking force in the 15,000-member Local 1031 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

It was too soon for Sadlowski in 1977, but history is riding with him and with many like him. It is not a matter of returning to the 1930s; history doesn't work that way, and today's new problems demand new solutions. But just as a New Left inevitably arose in the 1960s from the frustrations of blacks denied civil rights and the

oppressed of all countries, a struggle between the capitalist and the laborer."

These were obviously not the words of simple unionists. What motivated McGuire, Gompers, and their colleagues to form the AFL was not a desire for more tepid unionism, but for a more militant type. The Knights of Labor, at the, time, had become openly hostile to craft-union walkouts and, in line with the theory of class harmony, had helped undersell and break many strikes, including one by Gompers' cigarmakers. Organization of the AFL was an act of self-defense by the unionists within the Knights, who were prevented from taking decisive action for higher wages and shorter hours, and who therefore coalesced with craft unions outside the Knights to form the AFL. On their banner in 1886 and for the following decade was the then radical demand for an eight-hour day. McGuire's carpenters sparked a great demonstration in 1890 for this objective and won a substantial victory not only for themselves but for other unionists as well. This effort was in conjunction with May Day demonstrations by socialists throughout the world and it brought forth jubilant estimates by Marx's collaborator, Frederick Engels, about the unity of the "proletariat of Europe and America." Though their immediate goals were economic—higher wages, shorter hours—many of the first AFL leaders considered these as the first step toward the broader goal of abolishing the wage system, capitalism, itself. Socialists like Daniel De Leon exercised considerable influence on the AFL in its first days, and the socialist group remained a potent minority force within the organization for a few decades.

The men who led the AFL in its first period were selfless zealots. Eugene V. Debs, who became one of its most virile critics in later years, said of them: "The labor agitator of

the early days held no office, had no title, drew no salary, saw no footlights, heard no applause, never saw his name in print and fills an unknown grave."

Mother Jones, one of the colorful contemporaries of this formative stage, wrote in her autobiography:

These early leaders sought no publicity. They were singleminded, not interested in their own glory nor their own financial advancement. They did not serve labor for pay. . . . Never in the early days of the labor struggle would you find leaders wining and dining with the aristocracy, nor did their wives strut about like diamond bedecked peacocks; nor were they attended by humiliated, cringing colored servants. The wives of these leaders took in washing to make ends meet. Their children picked and sold berries. . . . In those days, labor's representatives did not sit on velvet chairs in conference with labor's oppressors. They did not dine in fashionable hotels with the representatives of the capitalists such as the Civil Federation. They did not ride in Pullmans nor make trips to Europe.

Until the time Sam Gompers became president of the AFL he had never held a salaried job with a labor union. His wage as the head of the new federation, frequently unpaid, was less than $20 a week. The AFL treasurer received only a token salary of $100 a year. Labor's struggle for existence was still so hard, and the sacrifices imposed on rank and file and leader both so great, that only a dream of a beautiful tomorrow could sustain the union leader in his task. Whatever else their faults or blind spots, neither Gompers nor any of his associates could have conceived of the vulgar philosophy of Dave Beck: "I run the union just like a business. We deal in one commodity—labor." Nor could any of them dream of a day when men like William E. Maloney of the operating engineers would earn $55,000 a year, plus an av-

their efforts, not only here but abroad—as they can *not* do today—they are in no position to challenge the power of the corporation.

Corporate globalization, too, has made a mockery of union power. A Department of Commerce study of 298 global firms showed that by 1970, sales of their foreign subsidiaries amounted to 37 per cent of their total sales and accounted for 44 per cent of their profits. American plants, especially those in labor-intensive fields, have moved wholesale to low-wage areas—Korea, Taiwan, Ghana, Hong Kong.

The state-managed economy presents an even more formidable problem. Government—Federal, state, and local—today generates a third or more of the national income. Its decisions on money, on regulation, on subsidies, on taxes, and on a hundred other matters shape the state of the economy as never before. Government is, in effect, the "third force," the silent but dominant partner, in every major collective bargaining agreement. If it reduces the military budget, workers at 100,000 defense plants are squeezed; if it permits the price of gasoline to rise, workers' paychecks everywhere are cut accordingly; if it raises interest rates through an action of the Federal Reserve Board, it throws construction workers out of work. Thus, increasingly, labor's problems are political rather than simply economic.

The labor establishment, basking in synthetic security, has not really weighed these problems or taken effective action to deal with them. In consequence, it is not only unprepared for the future, but incapable of meeting its present responsibilities. Real wages of the working class, for instance, are no higher today than they were in 1969.

* * *

A second negative result, flowing directly from the first, was a loss of perspective. Smug, satisfied, luxuriating in a sense of power, the labor establishment felt no need to examine and reexamine the imperatives of history. By traditional standards, the movement seemed impressively strong—twenty-two million members in 175 national and 71,409 local unions, with hundreds of millions of dollars in its treasuries and billions more in pension funds over which it often had veto power. But that success was an illusion. History had made demands on the movement which it could not meet under its present stewardship, structure, and philosophy; in a sense, it was just as out of touch with events as was the AFL in 1932.

Since 1886, the labor movement has considered the strike its basic weapon—a means of meeting power with power. But the strike weapon is blunted beyond recognition in an age of conglomerates and multinational corporations. Labor's present structure was forged at a time when corporations generally functioned within a single industry and a single country; the industrial organization of the CIO was enough to match that kind of power with labor's own. That is no longer true.

In 1961, when ITT had $1 billion in assets and almost all its operations were in telecommunications, a single national union might match power with it. But in recent years ITT has acquired a hundred subsidiaries worth four times that much, here and in seventy other nations. Only one-sixth of its investments are now in telecommunications, so that it deals with at least fifteen major unions—auto workers, teamsters, communication workers, electrical workers, bakers, plumbers, machinists, steelworkers, hotel workers, and others. A strike at any one of its companies—say at Wonder Bread—is hardly more than an irritant. Unless the fifteen unions can coordinate

erage of $56,000 a year in addition for expense money.

It was only in the following decades that American prosperity became the magnet to draw union leaders, in increasing numbers, away from their idealism and self-sacrifice to "business unionism." Capital investment in industry, which had increased ninefold from 1860 to 1900, doubled again in the next decade, and by 1919, it was six times what it had been in 1900. The value of manufactured products, which doubled from 1900 to 1910, tripled again in the next ten-year period. This was a setting ideally suited for that special and unique unionism which jettisoned the noble ideals of labor's pioneers in favor of the rugged individualism of the business community.

The Civil War and the general prosperity which it initiated was the true father of business unionism; just as it was for the "robber barons," the monopolies, and that peculiar American philosophy; "every man for himself, devil take the hindmost."

V

This second major turning point in our history eventually was followed by a third. After the 1929 depression, America reached a new impasse. The wheels of industry ground to a halt, the majority of the working class was reduced to unemployment or partial employment, and a whole new set of government principles and measures was necessary before the impasse could be breached. The New Deal was a face-lifting of America, another stage of the American revolution; it was also the precursor of a new type of unionism—social unionism—that would eventually give business unionism

its greatest challenge. We shall return to the New Deal era later in our chronicle. But two generations were to elapse between the birth of business unionism and this challenge. In that period it sank roots so deep that it made a shambles of many labor ideals.

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not desperate men. On the public platform their leaders sounded off with booming phrases directed at the enemy Capital; but privately they, like the strikers, were calm, cool, even friendly warriors."

There is no doubt that millions of union members reaped considerable material benefits from the trade-off of security for moderation. But there were at least two over-riding negative results. One was the divorce between the labor leadership and the rank and file. As the time-span of contracts increased from one year to two or three or even more, it was no longer necessary for officers to consult the members so often. The union shop (which requires all employes to join the union within thirty days of employment) and the dues checkoff further strengthened what was rapidly becoming a labor establishment, but reduced contact between the individual member and top officials.

"When anti-unionism was abandoned in the 1940s and 1950s by significant segments of American industry," George Brooks of Cornell University has written, "a new world was created for the unions. For it now turned out that the imperative requirements of the union, that regular flow of new members and dues, could be underwritten by the *employer* with considerably more reliability than was possible under earlier arrangements."

This very security, however, made the union chiefs sluggish. Even in the more militant unions, the interval between conventions was extended from a year to two years, then three years, and in some instances four years or more. Factionalism tapered off, since it was difficult to sustain an opposition group for the longer periods. Thus, in one union after another, internal ferment was replaced by relative calm, and as the leadership became more entrenched, rank-and-file checks and balances dwindled to the vanishing point.

Management and pliant union officials were not shy about entering into such partnerships; the machinists tripled their membership in six years and at least part of that gain must have been the result of corporate "preference." The companies, in effect, were choosing "safe" unions and "safe" union leaders to represent their employes, just as they had chosen them in the 1920s when outright company unionism was rampant.

But of even greater significance in rolling back the labor revolution of the 1930s was the institutionalization of the collective bargaining process. It amounted to a trade-off by which labor's leadership was given a measure of security in return for curbing the militancy of the rank and file.

Management had fiercely resisted the 1935 Wagner Act, but ultimately discovered that it could be turned to important advantage. In the past, thousands of strikes had been waged simply to win collective bargaining rights; now these could be secured simply by petitioning the National Labor Relations Board for an election. If the union won a simple majority, the corporation was mandated to recognize it and enter into negotiations on wages and working conditions. This gave unions and their officials a measure of stability, and usually was painless for management, at least in the major industries, because the additional costs could be passed on to the consumer through administered prices.

The institutionalization of industrial relations did not penetrate everywhere, of course; many industries — textiles, for instance — continued their bitter resistance to unionization. Nor did the new "labor peace" mean an end to strikes. But the tone of industrial relations changed. As *Fortune* magazine observed about the 1946 strike wave in which 4.5 million workers hit the bricks: "The strikers ... were

The Unfinished Revolution

I

What — if anything — is wrong with the American labor movement?

Leaving aside the racketeers, who constitute a very small percentage of union officialdom, what *is* wrong with business unionism? What *is* wrong with social unionism? Both have greatly improved the wages and hours of ten, twelve, or fifteen million American workers. Both have added to their security and dignity. With all their faults, both have been major pillars of American democracy; and social unionism has helped win important social improvements not only for labor but for the rest of the nation.

It is true that to greater or lesser degrees the two major forms of American unionism have become institutionalized. Both evolved from a measure of radicalism to a greater or lesser moderateness. But what is wrong with a moderate union movement so long as it improves the lot of its members? The leftist can argue that labor should fight for socialism as a matter of principle, but even socialism, if it has any merit — and the term certainly needs serious redefinition — must have a concrete meaning. If the lot of the worker is good, then why change it? What difference does it make what name his social system bears — whether

capitalism, socialism, communism, feudalism, or what have you—so long as it serves his best purposes?

The answer to these questions is, first of all, that a majority of the working class is outside the union fold and does not enjoy the benefits that the established organizations may win for their members. The fact that a construction worker earns $3.50 per hour hardly helps the unorganized retail clerk who earns only $1. Second—of greater significance—is the fact that we live in a changing world. A stable, institutionalized union movement can in its own limited way serve labor, or part of labor, only so long as capitalism is stable. The AFL served the skilled worker well for forty years, but it did progressively less for the unskilled, and it finally was unable to meet the test of a changing America at one of its three great historical turning points, the depression.

The CIO succeeded in giving a new impetus to American labor. It provided something that the AFL couldn't. The reasons for this success have some bearing on the present stagnation of the American labor movement. What accounts for the sensational growth of the CIO in a period of two or three short years? Different reasons are given by different people: The CIO had millions of dollars at its disposal; it was given a lift by the Wagner Act; it had a friendly government in Washington; it charged only a dollar a month dues. All these things undoubtedly contributed, but the outstanding reason for CIO's progress was its crusading spirit, its evangelism, idealism—or whatever name you choose to call it.

At given moments in history the crusader has the ability to bring out the nobility in men, to unite them in a passionate campaign against injustice. He wins their allegiance because he himself is willing to sacrifice anything and ev-

clearly on the march, and its victory was manifest not only in the spread of industrial unionism and a significant improvement in wage levels, but in the many reforms of the New Deal era which labor insurgency helped prod to passage.

But we tend to overlook the fact that big business was not supine under this assault; it mounted a counteroffensive which effectively isolated the CIO and progressively diluted that "good old union spirit." The counteroffensive took two forms: the signing of "backdoor contracts" with conservative union officials (and gangsters), and the institutionalization of the collective bargaining process.

The "back-door contracts" were designed to keep workers from affiliating with a union of their choice. When a militant young CIO group began organizing retail clerks in a large Chicago grocery chain in 1937, for example, the company signed a contract with a known criminal linked to the Capone mob. It had two clauses — one calling for a "closed shop" in which all employes had to join the union, and the other providing that there would be no wage increase for five years.

Most back-door deals were not quite so crude, but the technique was widely used. In 1937, A.O. Wharton of the machinists' union wrote to his sub-officers, "Since the Supreme Court decision upholding the Wagner Labor Act many employers now realize that it is the law of our country and they are prepared to deal with labor organizations. These employers have expressed a preference to deal with AFL organizations rather than Lewis, Hillman, Dubinsky, Howard, and their gang of sluggers, communists, radicals, and soap box artists, professional bums, expelled members of labor unions, outright scabs, and the Jewish organizations with all their red affiliates."

In 1933, as American free enterprise was being transformed into controlled capitalism, a moribund AFL which still opposed welfare and unemployment compensation as "doles" that robbed workers of their initiative was beset by a band of radicals who insisted on a different brand of unionism. Only this motley force of communists, socialists, Trotskyists, and former Wobblies, who were prepared to work outside the system if the system refused them a legitimate channel to redress their grievances, could have led the great strikes of the 1930s. John L. Lewis, Sidney Hillman, David Dubinsky, and other "labor statesmen" took the bows, but they did not do the organizing or lead the work stoppages.

The three major strikes of 1934, which gave vital thrust to the labor breakthrough, were civil wars in microcosm. Harry Bridges's longshoremen formed into 1,000-man picket lines on San Francisco's Embarcadero and violently resisted police attempts to reopen the port. The Toledo Auto-Lite strike was saved from collapse by Sam Pollack, Art Preis, Ted Selancer, and other members of A.J. Muste's American Workers Party, who led unemployed supporters in violating injunctions and fighting off 900 National Guardsmen. Strikers in Minneapolis walkouts, led by Farrell Dobbs, the Dunne brothers, and other Trotskyists, used flying squads in military formation to challenge the police.

By consensus, the CIO's greatest impetus came from the forty-three-day sitdown strike in 1936–1937 at General Motors—conceived by two communist sympathizers and one socialist who spurred the workers to seize and occupy corporate property. There were 900 "illegal" sitdowns (180 in the rubber plants alone) during that hectic period, and between 1934 and 1936 eighty-eight strikers were killed and 18,000 arrested on picket lines. Labor was

erything, his possessions, his time, even his life itself, on their behalf. The thin little man with a "diaper," Gandhi, can bring millions of Hindus exultantly to boycott British goods because he himself is willing to fast unto death or spend years in prison on their behalf. Throughout history crusaders have given electrifying impulses to tens of millions of people, have welded them together in a way which solid, stable institutions could never do. The texture of life is made up of dreams of a beautiful tomorrow. The crusader gives reality to that dream. The Walter Reuther of 1936-1937-1938, arrested by police, beaten up by Henry Ford's goon squads while distributing leaflets, walking picket lines and living in poverty to serve his fellow worker—and the hundreds of other Walter Reuthers of the 1930's—brought out in hundreds of thousands of followers a similar willingness to sacrifice for a cause. Workers ran through police gauntlets, submitted themselves to tear gas and clubbings, some even to death, for the vision of a world free of exploitation. The flat exhortations of the old AFL leaders in favor of higher wages could not at that turning point compete with the ringing call of CIO evangelists for recognition, dignity, a better world.

By contrast to the crusader, the institution cannot evoke selfless sacrifice. It cannot unite people for bold new action; it mobilizes them only for routine patterns of behavior. The crusader is a known individual, the institution an anonymous *thing*. The institution can function well in a milieu of stability, when it does not have to confront the unexpected; but put it into a situation of crisis and it is immobilized. When there is a strike the crusader denounces injustice and offers to fight to his very last breath to eradicate it. The institution mathematically calculates how long a $38-million strike fund will last and makes its plans

accordingly. The crusader makes his sacrifice in the name of humanity, not for himself; it does not matter what happens to him personally. The institution may fight vigorously, but only to defend itself; humanity is secondary.

Perhaps the fundamental problem faced by the labor movement, as well as other social movements, is how to keep the crusading spirit alive in periods which are *not* historical turning points. Can the crusader or the crusading spirit make any contribution in stable times or stable circumstances? This is a philosophical problem of great import, but for the purposes of this study it is a moot question. America and American labor are no longer in a period of stability but in a mounting instability. This is an era of crisis, requiring the rekindling of the fires of idealism. For labor the challenge results from three factors:

1. The second industrial revolution around automation and atomic energy, which threatens to change both the character of the work force and work itself.
2. The tens of millions of unorganized workers.
3. Most important—the permanent world crisis which places the United States at its fourth great historical turning point.

II

Iron Age of June 12, 1958, headlines the fact that "union growth lags as automation begins to take its toll." The beginnings of the electronics age are changing the composition of the American work force. Blue-collar production workers are being laid off, white-collar workers are being added. One aluminum com-

Young workers rallied to Sadlowski's cause—"He's the kind of guy who speaks for us," one of them said. They worried about the 55,000 men and women who had been laid off in the last few years because they feared they might be next. And they were concerned about the union grievances piling up without resolution — a backlog they attributed to the snug relationship between their officials and management brought about by the no-strike ENA agreement.

Older workers, however, were more cautious. "Why should we change?" they asked Sadlowski's organizers. "We have a good contract." ENA might be wrong in principle, but in practice they had received a substantial wage increase under its provisions, as well as improved vacation and pension plans. The right to strike might be the cornerstone of unionism, but they did not want to strike if they could avoid it. Sadlowski, they felt, was destined to lead them toward payless weeks on the picket line. He was an unknown quantity; McBride was "safe." Typically, at one plant in Madison, Wisconsin, the day shift, composed of workers with the most seniority, voted predominantly for McBride; the night shift, made up of younger workers, gave the edge to Sadlowski. Even allowing for likely vote frauds and violations of the rules, McBride had the votes to win.

* * *

From a broader perspective, Sadlowski's defeat is a commentary on where the union movement has been and where it is going. The dissident from Chicago was unable to overcome a legacy that began with the labor revolution of the mid-1930s but evolved into a quiet but successful counterrevolution by management to subjugate its working-class adversaries.

Philip Murray. Membership dues went directly to Pittsburgh, where the organizing committee took its bite and sent the rest back to the locals; any local that stepped out of line could be deprived of its funds.

Unlike members of most other unions, basic steelworkers were given no opportunity to vote on contracts—a right which Abel promised to institute when he was elected in 1965, but never did. Communists, who had built the union in the 1930s, were later driven from its ranks, and though the organizing committee was ultimately transformed into a legitimate trade union structure and some opposition arose from time to time (in 1957, when Don Rarick campaigned on the issue of a dues increase, and in 1969, when another unknown, Emil Narick, ran against Abel), the "official family" was never seriously challenged. Even when Abel ousted David McDonald in 1965, it was a palace coup, within the establishment, rather than a rank-and-file crusade.

With that kind of power lodged at the union's Pittsburgh headquarters, Sadlowski had his work cut out for him as director of the Chicago-based District 31. The Abel leadership first refused to turn over union files. It held up funds. It cut Sadlowski's staff from sixty-three representatives to forty-four, and harried him relentlessly. Four or eight more years of this under McBride was more than Sadlowski was willing to contemplate. He decided to take a flyer for the top post—but as events have now proven, he could not quite make it. He and his staff visited dozens of cities and proselytized thousands who came to their meetings, but on election day they were unable to place poll observers in more than half of the 5,400 local unions. They were particularly weak in Canada (with 180,000 members), and the South also was handily carried by the "official family."

pany, which doubled in sales from 1947 to 1957, cut its production staff from 36,000 to 33,000 but raised its office staff by a full 5,000. Though national production in this decade enlarged by 43 per cent, the number of factory employees remained almost stationary—only seven-tenths of 1 percent higher than in 1947.

The electronics industry lost 200,000 of 900,000 workers in the short period of four years from 1953 to 1957. An ore mine which had 5,000 workers eight years ago now operates with 1,200 mechanized miners. Where 45,000 sheet and tin workers were employed in one strip mill in 1940, 4,400 do the same work today. The steel industry, auto, rubber, can, mining, and many others have steadily reduced their hourly paid force as the new wonders of modern technology made the laborer redundant. By 1956, for the first time in history, nonproduction workers exceeded direct producers on American payrolls.

Even more dramatic changes impend. On the drawing boards of the automation engineers are new control devices that will make it possible for acres of factory or office space to be depopulated of workers entirely. Automated equipment will process raw materials, assemble them, package them, and load them onto freight cars without their being touched by a human hand. These machines can adjust to various conditions, inspect their products, correct their mistakes, and even change parts when they break down. One writer visualizes the day when a factory becomes so compact it can be operated on a railroad train, making its deliveries while it is manufacturing its product on flatcars. The change is likely to be even more dramatic in the white-collar field than in the factory. The great insurance-company offices of the future may be consolidated into three or four large rooms instead of the current twenty-five-story buildings. Automation has been mak-

ing great strides in this field. Tomorrow's wonderworld includes innumerable plans for lightening the load of labor: automated grocery stores where the "checkers" are no longer trim young ladies but mechanical monsters who take money, "read" the bills, test it for counterfeit, make change, and wrap the packages in half the time that it takes a person to do it today; automated butcher shops, with the meat already sliced, packed, weighed, and priced by giant machines in the packinghouse plant rather than human labor; and many similar miraculous innovations.

What these technological changes mean for labor's bargaining power must be clear. As the proportion of organized (blue-collar) workers declines in favor of the unorganized technicians and office workers, established unions lose members and finances. In each plant they become weaker relative to the employer with whom they deal; for in case of a strike five hundred men in the automated shops can be replaced more easily than five thousand today. Further, the machine tends to become more important to production than the man. If the workers strike in a mechanized plant they can shut the factory down, but in tomorrow's automated shops it may be possible for a skeleton force of nonunion supervisors and office help to run the operation for the period of a strike. That is almost true today in telephone offices; the mere walkout of telephone girls and linemen does not cripple services for a long time. Thus labor's most potent weapon, the strike, is blunted. Finally, automation reduces some of the cohesiveness of the union as workers are separated from each other by relatively large distances within the automated plants.

Organization of the unorganized is thus no longer a "luxury" to the labor movement, but a vital necessity. It is no longer a question of adding more numbers to the union roster by

also attained their present status without competition, simply by coming to terms with two aged leaders, Frank Rosenblum and Jacob Potofsky, who were long past retirement age. To these and other union leaders it seemed that Sadlowski, in challenging the union establishment, was committing the ultimate heresy.

* * *

Sadlowski's defeat in the union balloting on February 8 can be viewed from two perspectives. In narrow terms, it seems obvious in retrospect that he was aiming at a virtually unobtainable goal. He was, in fact, aware of that when he undertook the campaign. As director of District 31 for only two years, he had not had time to build a record that would galvanize national support among steelworkers. He had few allies in the other twenty-four districts, spread over the United States and Canada. Of the 850 international representatives employed by this vast organization, who have the ear of local presidents and chief stewards, barely a handful were on Sadlowski's side, even in his own district. As one of my friends—a man with a long background in labor—put it, "Eddie had to build a new union of more than a million members in just three months."

But when they surveyed the situation last year, Sadlowski and two union brothers who are among his closest friends, Clem and Jim Balanoff, decided that if they were to wait another four or eight years, they would be reduced to impotence.

The steelworkers' union is an over-centralized structure with all the power concentrated at the top. Unlike the UAW or the Rubber Workers, it was created in the 1930s as an "organizing committee," not as an autonomous union; authority was exclusively held by John L. Lewis and the subaltern he assigned to steel,

Moreover, the David-versus-Goliath way Sadlowski had won his post as director of District 31—the largest district in the union—reinforced his appeal. Counted out by 1,700 votes when he first ran in 1973, he took his case to the U.S. Department of Labor, which uncovered massive fraud by Sadlowski's opponents and, after a long court case, forced the "official family" around retiring president I.W. Abel to conduct a new poll. In December 1974, the maverick challenger upset all calculations by winning a lopsided victory.

On the other side of the spectrum, the labor establishment recognized Sadlowski as an enemy, and for about the same reasons that radicals and liberals recognized him as a friend. Lloyd McBride, the man he ran against, and Abel, the man he hoped to replace, both damned him for soliciting funds from "outsiders" (such as Victor Reuther, Joseph Rauh, John Kenneth Galbraith, and a few liberal businessmen from the anti-war movement of the 1960s). They denounced him for not being a "team" man. They were joined by George Meany, Albert Shanker, and the leaders of the United Auto Workers and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers, among others. What these men resented, I am certain, is not what Sadlowski said or did, but the fact that he was challenging "The Club."

Bitter factional fights in the top echelons of the union movement were common in the formative days of the CIO, but things just are not done that way anymore. When Walter Reuther died in 1970, the presidency of the UAW passed to Leonard Woodcock by a quiet arrangement among the powerful vice presidents of the union, which later received pro forma ratification at the UAW convention; and it is being passed on in the same way now that Woodcock is retiring. Murray Finley and his team at the Amalgamated Clothing Workers

unionizing virgin fields, but of protecting the established organizations as well. The unorganized white-collar worker, technicians, and service workers become a threat to the bargaining power of the organized employees.

Beyond this problem there are the more urgent psychological and social ones involved in the second industrial revolution. It is anticipated, for instance, that with full automation 200,000 workers will be able to turn out as many automobiles as a million workers in the pre-automation period. The replaced workers constitute a social problem. They must either retrain for automated jobs or find other work. If they shift to retail and service fields, their wage rates are cut by half, sometimes more. Many new industries would have to emerge to absorb the large numbers whose jobs are made obsolete by the automated giants. These new industries, if they develop—and it is not certain they will—may resolve the national economic problem, but not necessarily the human one. Automation requires different skills from those in mechanical factories, and older workers trained in the mechanical techniques do not make the adjustment easily. One sixty-one-year-old man, who was shifted from the Ford River Rouge foundry machine shop to the automated engine plant at Dearborn, failed to adjust. He put his difficulties this way:

"This machine has some eighty drills ... and twenty-two blocks are going through. You got to watch. Every few minutes you got to watch to see everything is all right. And they [the machines] got so many lights and switches—ninety-some lights. It's hard on your mind." The intricacy of the new job terrifies this worker: "If there's a break in the machine, the whole line breaks down. They all look to you. They want to keep up production, and I don't blame them. But sometimes you make a little mistake, and it's no good for you, no good

for the foreman, no good for the company, no good for the union."

A sociologist, David Riesman, noting this human problem, urges that society set up "some social fund [for] easing the blow to the casualties of progress." In the past, he says, society has "not paid the cost of readjustment," but it should do so in the future.

Automation not only will result in technological unemployment, but in a reshaping of our cities, our factory system, our human beings, and our politics. Factories that require only a few dozen or a few hundred employees will find it more expedient to move out of the big urban centers to the small cities and even rural areas. The shift in population will tend to make one unending suburbia between big cities like Chicago and Milwaukee, changing political alignments and political structures. It will decisively affect the big city machines and affect adversely the farm-block vote. It will punctuate such problems as civil rights, with Negroes attempting to move into what are now usually all-white suburbs. It will bring with it a host of new social and behavior patterns.

Automation eventually must change the measurement of wages itself. On what basis shall an employee be paid? Today he is paid for his "time," because time is directly related to his productivity. If he produces one piece a minute, he produces sixty in an hour and 480 in a day. This is the measure of his value to the corporation and the basis for payment. But what is the measure when the worker merely watches lights all day? How is the value of his work determined then? By the number of mistakes he catches? By his mere presence? In estimating costs, the employer no longer has to pay primary concern to the productivity of the worker, but to the productivity of the machine. Under automation, just as under mass production generally, the amount of invested capital

form, there was a general recognition that this campaign for leadership of the largest affiliate in the AFL-CIO could be a turning point in the history of the labor movement—that it might rekindle a sense of idealism that has been on the wane for three decades.

Perhaps there was an element of wishful thinking in these expectations; it has been a long dry spell for those who dream of the revitalization of a labor movement that has lost its spirit. More importantly, however, there was a mystique around Sadlowski which conveyed that "good old union spirit," as the ancient labor song has it. He projected earthiness and empathy with those he represented. His father had been a steelworker in the turbulent days of 1937, when Chicago police were shooting down Republic Steel strikers on the South Side, and one of Eddie's early memories was of Eddie Sr. describing the Memorial Day Massacre. His grandfather, too, had worked in the mills. His wife, Marlene, was the incarnation of a Labor Women's Auxiliary—she operated the telephones in the campaign office and cooked Polish sausage for fund raisers at the headquarters of Local 65.

Sadlowski's public image was of a "tough guy," but in person he is warm and gracious. ("Have a cup of my bean soup," he pleaded with a visitor. "I just cooked it myself.") He is a voracious reader, self-educated, shrewd, wise in the ways of the street. Though he is not affiliated with any radical group, and I think never has been, he did not hesitate to describe himself as "a socialist in the tradition of Eugene V. Debs." Thousands of workers who came in contact with him on a one-to-one basis were impressed. Even his weaknesses—he is a less than gifted speaker, for instance, who seldom turns a neat phrase—reinforced the rank-and-filer mystique.

leadership. The Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA), by which the union gave up its right to strike in basic steel, was decried by Sadlowski because it "stripped the muscle out of our collective bargaining," but the issue was handled delicately: instead of demanding that ENA be repudiated, he simply urged that it "be voted on by the members."

Sadlowski and his organization, Steelworkers Fight Back, issued no ringing cry for a labor party, no call on the nation to cut back on its military budget, no innovative proposals on how to rehire the 55,000 workers laid off in basic steel or how to deal with inflation. The social problems that beleaguer ninety million working people were ignored. By the standards of yesteryear, when Emil Mazey, for example, demanded that the United Auto Workers (UAW) help launch a new political party or Walter Reuther urged "equality of sacrifice" in World War II, the Sadlowski campaign was a tea party.

Yet it unnerved the labor establishment, on one side, and greatly heartened thousands of left-of-center people, on the other. "What I know about the 1930s, I've learned from books," a young man told me at Sadlowski's headquarters the night the ballots were being counted, "but that's the kind of labor movement I'd like to see again. If Eddie wins the steelworkers' presidency he'll revive that spirit."

The same message, in different form, was heard from old-timers who *had* been around in the 1930s. At a fund-raising function near Chicago, one former steelworker, now a successful businessman, told his audience, "We always say during a crisis like Vietnam or Watergate that if only we had progressive allies in the labor movement our task would be much easier. Well, here's our chance to create one." Instinctively, despite the tepid Sadlowski plat-

will grow, while the share of wages in total costs declines. Presumably, therefore, management should be able to pay what is called a "living wage" without feeling too much economic pressure, since wages will be only a small component of costs. In the long run this may mean a more bountiful living standard; in the short run labor's problem is to get management to shorten hours and raise wages as productivity improves.

Tomorrow's human beings, in an automated world, will also be of a different breed. They will need more education to be sure, but there is some danger that they will become more conformist. History indicates that the machine all too often remakes man in its own image; that man, far from being the master of the machine, is usually its servant. Automation robs the average worker of still more of the satisfaction that work should give him. In the present mechanical system he loses the sense of creativity, but he does maintain some sense of judgment. He must measure to see if an item is the right size or "off" a thousandth of an inch. He must test it for many desired qualities. There is still some "art" to his labor. But in an automated factory the judgment is left to the electronic machine. The electronic machine now judges size, quality, weight, and other factors far better than any human can. It expels faulty tools or products and automatically reworks them. The first industrial revolution made man mechanically minded, money minded. Will the second industrial revolution make him more conformist, less capable of independent judgment?

This deficiency in modern man is already acute, and of considerable concern to many thinkers.

Robert M. Hutchins, president of the Fund for the Republic, claims that industrialism is producing men "who are not free in any real

sense and who may not even want to be free . . . We may say that the aim of industrialization is to get rid of men altogether, except as consumers, and to make them interchangeable parts of an industrial machine. But the interchangeable man is not a man. Since he is not, freedom and justice are of little importance to him."

"The individual worker [under automation]," says Dr. Bernard Karsh, "loses his importance and is replaced by the team, and greater value is placed on the operating unit as a whole. Whyte's *The Organization Man* may indeed replace the traditional individualism which has characterized American society for so long." The trend toward dehumanization of the work process will doubtless continue with automation, unless some means is found to combine creativity and education with work.

Assuming that the work week must be steadily reduced under the impact of automation, there is some doubt as to what the worker will do with his leisure time. Will he "moonlight" with one or two additional jobs in his spare hours? Or will he find some positive means of using his leisure? Will a shorter work week itself really solve the human problem, or must some effort be made to combine work and education?

An experiment along these lines has been conducted by a group of men in a watch-case factory at Boimandu, France. This plant has been cooperatively owned since France was defeated by Hitler in World War II. After only three months of operation the men at Boimandu became the most efficient watch-case makers in the country. They didn't shorten their work week. Instead they added nine hours of education to their job. Instead of working forty-eight hours they actually worked only thirty-nine hours, but the rest of the time was spent studying engineering, physics, literature, Marxism, Christianity, dancing, singing, and

The Coming Revolt in Labor

Not for decades has a contest for union office raised so many hopes—or, for that matter, so many hackles—as Ed Sadlowski's ill-fated effort to topple the leadership of the 1.4-million-member steelworkers' union. For three months, from November to February, almost all of the radical groups or grouplets in the country, as well as a sizable sector of the liberal community, adopted the burly Chicagoan as their own, and cheered him toward victory. (See "Labor Maverick on the March," by George Bogdanich, in the August 1976 issue of *The Progressive.*)

Sadlowski's widespread support—which, unfortunately, did not translate into enough votes within the United Steelworkers of America — was all the more remarkable because there was nothing radical in his platform — nothing, indeed, for even a middle-of-the-road liberal to get excited about.

The ten points in Sadlowski's standard campaign document were a model of moderation centering on a single point: union democracy. He called for giving members the right to ratify union contracts, for terminating the cozy relationships with management designed to boost productivity, for lowering the dues of workers on partial layoff, for protecting jobs against runaway shops, for improving safety and grievance provisions, for instituting honest

with human problems. It is also the direction of labor as well, if we are to have a *participative* rather than manipulative democracy.

Whatever the specific tactics and the final dimensions of labor's goal, one thing is certain. The only means by which labor can make a new step forward is through new crusades that infuse idealism, more idealism, and still more idealism.

And that, incidentally, applies to American society as well.

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basketball. In addition, the group bought a 235-acre farm and each worker and his family worked on it for three ten-day periods a year. Considering that the men had a month's vacation, this meant a total work year of only ten months, all of it designed to utilize more fully the worker's talents, involve him in management, and widen his horizons. The experiment at Boimandu cannot be applied universally or even on a large scale, but it seems obvious that work, education, and creativity must some day be combined.

III

Of far greater consequence for labor than even the second industrial revolution is the historical impasse which America finds itself in today. The United States and its allies won the Second World War, but they have not won the peace. Most of their colonies have gained independence in the greatest wave of national revolutions in all history, and many of their former spheres of influence have defected either to neutralism or to Soviet influence. In a material sense the United States has never been stronger. But strength can be deceptive. The historian Arnold Toynbee has noted that civilizations often decline at the height of their power, when they destroy their "creative minority." Certainly the Soviet challenge is the most formidable one the United States has encountered in our lifetime. The nation knew it could ride out the depression, particularly after Roosevelt came to office. It seldom had doubts about winning the war against Hitler. But there is a pervasive feeling today that victory against the new challenge is far from certain.

Chester Bowles has been arguing for some time that America needs a new "consensus."

"On three previous occasions," he writes, "the American people have come up against new situations which no longer responded to the slogans and political approaches which had been created for an earlier day.... Unless I am profoundly mistaken, a similar situation is developing today, out of which a new political and economic liberalism will ultimately take shape. As in 1800, 1861 and 1932, the American people are again starting to blink away their self-complacency and to grope for a more positive role to play in a world that cries for a reassertion of their country's greatness.... There are few who will argue seriously that either party as such has yet offered such leadership."

We are living in a revolutionary age, one in which America's role as a great power is seriously threatened. Each national revolution creates a crisis for America, becomes a factor in the intense, full-scale conflict between two social systems, capitalism and communism.

Until World War I capitalism ruled the world unchallenged. The only other social system was a decadent feudal order in the underdeveloped countries, and these nations were firmly held under the boot of imperialism. The great powers dominated the whole planet. After World War I, Soviet communism threatened the capitalist edifice and a wave of revolutions followed for six or seven years—in Germany, Bulgaria, Finland, Austria, Turkey, China, and many other lands. But in the end Soviet Russia remained alone, isolated, relatively weak. Capitalism seemed secure.

Now after World War II all this has changed. Despite the totalitarian character of Soviet rule it has attracted millions of people away from the West; capitalism is no longer unchallenged, it has formidable opposition. The communist world is a great land empire encompassing more than 900 million people. It has broken out of a *cordon sanitaire.* Beyond that, at least twenty noncommunist nations with perhaps a population of 750 million have

inside labor can be improved. In organizing the service industries and the South, the Negro must be a key factor. And in the process of enrolling him, some of the idealism from his civil rights crusade may brush off on the rest of labor.

Another wellspring of idealism may be the South itself. It is still virgin territory, just as were the mass production industries in the 1930's. And just as with the mass industries a generation ago, organization in the South is so difficult, repression by police and legislatures so great, that a large strike wave there must unleash considerable self-sacrifice and stoke the fires of "insurgency."

Still another source, of course, is within the leadership of labor itself, especially in its secondary echelons. During the 1958 recession Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the United Auto Workers, made a series of ringing speeches in his union reminiscent of his talks when he was an unemployed leader in the thirties. Lesser leaders of other organizations were similarly stirred to speech and action of a more fiery type. Their inherent dedication fed on the fuel of unemployment and gave some visionary leadership to many disheartened people.

No one can predict the course by which idealism will be reborn in the labor movement. Most likely it will result from a combination of factors, both objective and subjective. But neither the materialism of business unionism nor the remoteness of social unionism will be altered appreciably until there is a resurgence of evangelism in the house of labor. That resurgence cannot be hurried; history waits its own good time. But it must be anticipated.

Admittedly this is all visionary. But it has roots in reality. This is the inexorable direction of America itself, if it is to survive: more logic in social relations; less anarchy; preoccupation

University of Michigan, there will be a permanent army of 175,000 jobless in that state even after the nation recovers from the recession. Steel production fell at one point below half its total capacity. Heavy industry in general seems to have hit its peak of employment. Under the circumstances, the American economy may stabilize at an ever-growing rate of unemployment: Four million this year, six the next, and perhaps more in subsequent years. The trend of the thirties, when unemployment was slowly reduced after the New Deal came to power, may very well be reversed. Short of war itself, America can hardly spend much more for military supplies; and short of a new approach in government, it can hardly stimulate greater production in the basic industries. A permanent army of unemployed can emerge later than Mills visualized, but if it does—as seems likely—that may be one of the wellsprings for a new idealism.

Another is the Negro movement. For the first time in history the Negro people in America are developing an effective leadership of their own. Young, well-educated Negroes like Rev. Martin Luther King of Montgomery, Alabama, are not only emerging as leaders but fashioning new techniques of struggle. One of these, the nonviolent resistance used in the Montgomery bus boycott, captured the imagination of the American people and probably did more for civil rights than any single event of this period, except for the Supreme Court decision on school integration. If the effort is sustained it must eventually affect the trade-union movement as well, because on winning civil rights the Negro will certainly insist on economic rights. As things stand now, the Negro usually works in the low-paying and unorganized service industries. A disproportionate share of his brethren are outside the union fold but most anxious to join if the climate

achieved independence and are currently in the midst of a combined national and social revolution. This is the greatest social tornado in all history and it poses tasks for America of titanic proportions. Not only is there the heightened tension of international relations and the constant danger of war, but all internal problems in the United States now become *part* of the world conflict. The nation didn't relish its periodic depressions a few decades ago, but it could survive. Today a full-scale depression might be fatal, opening the door to communism in the weaker capitalist nations like France or Italy, and estranging America completely from the uncommitted nations of Asia and Africa. A depression might also revive the Communist party here. Though the party has shrunk to five thousand or fewer members, and has alienated most of its sympathizers, any economic cataclysm could bring it back to life.

In the face of this, American capitalism has been modifying its own character to an extent undreamed of either by the stern advocates of laissez-faire or the liberals of just a generation ago. Our nation is changing drastically in front of our eyes.

The first important change is in the military sphere. For the first time in American history we have become a peace-time military power, spending almost 10 percent of the gross national product—$40 or $42 billion a year—on armaments. We are attempting to gain what C. Wright Mills calls "peace through mutual fright." In the process we are transforming the fiber of our own society as well. General Omar Bradley pointed out that in modern warfare it is "nations, not armies, [that] go to war." It is inevitable, therefore, that the nation emphasize the military theme of obedience rather than that of individualism to which we have aspired throughout history. Conformity, loyalty checks, antisubversive laws and prosecutions

are symptoms of this altered emphasis. As President Woodrow Wilson long ago pointed out: "To fight you must be brutal and ruthless, and the spirit of ruthless brutality will enter into every fiber of our national life, infecting Congress, the courts, the policemen on the beat, the man on the street. Conformity would be the only virtue and every man who refused to conform would pay the penalty." The first effect of the cold war has been precisely this trend to conformity.

A second change is in foreign policy. The United States is doing things today which would seem unbelievable to citizens of 1920 or 1910. We are allotting billions of dollars to aid our traditional economic competitors—Britain, Germany, Japan, France, Italy. We have spent $78.5 billion for military, economic and "dual purpose" aid to the countries of the so-called free world to save them from a fate presumably worse than war—communism. We are not only giving economic and military aid, but political support for a customs union and a political unification of Europe. In the face of a greater challenge we are buttressing the economics of nations we ordinarily would be fighting.

A third significant change is in the attitude toward the colonial nations. Western policy has been confused and begrudging, but the imperialist powers have given up one colony after another since World War II. The old imperialism is finished and cannot be revived. When France and Britain attempted an imperialist venture in 1956 into the Suez area of Egypt, the United States put its foot down so firmly that its two allies had to get out. In 1958, the United States and Britain sent troops into Lebanon and Jordan, but world opinion and opinion at home forced another withdrawal.

program? There is little of the insurgent impulse in America today; the "creative minority" is being whittled down. This, says James B. Carey, "is the new age of conformity. It is an age in which one does not shout against injustice because shouting is impolite and out of style. Poverty and slums at home and hunger abroad cause little or no indignation although they may on occasion be the subject of a wisecrack from some well-dressed juvenile delinquent of almost any age. This is a matter of concern to the entire labor movement and to all thoughtful Americans. Certainly, labor must never become too polite to scream out loud."

C. Wright Mills in his *New Men of Power,* published in 1948, visualizes the "coming slump" as the compelling force of a new idealism. Possibly that is true, though none of the three postwar slumps have been of such proportions. At the height of the 1958 recession 8 per cent of the work force was unemployed, most of whom received unemployment compensation up to thirty-nine weeks. This compares with 25 per cent in 1933, when there was no compensation. No mood of desperation prevailed among the jobless and no new evangelism came to the surface in the house of labor. It is possible, however, that in the years to come this may change. A number of basic industries show the same signs of long-term illness as they did a generation ago. In 1958, the automobile industry, with a capacity to produce twelve million cars a year, was manufacturing only at the rate of four or four and a half million. Economists estimated that not until 1995 at the earliest would the nation be able to consume twelve million automobiles a year. In the meantime the auto workers were suffering greater unemployment than any other sector of labor. More than 400,000 were unemployed in the auto center, Michigan, alone, and according to Dr. William Haber of the

the racketeer could no longer sign "sweetheart" contracts or perform special services for individual employers or employer's associations.

Tomorrow's labor movement will differ from the present one as the AFL-CIO differs from the union federations of a century ago. Among other things, its activities will include a comprehensive program of adult education. As automation increases productivity and the work week can be reduced to thirty-five, thirty, and twenty hours a week, unions will be conducting "on the job" educational programs to broaden the horizons of their members and give life a fuller meaning. Education will not end in grammar school or high school, but will be a life-long avocation. There is no guarantee that education in itself ensures democracy, but it makes democracy more possible—both in the union and in society generally.

Other programmatic planks for labor, if it reorients toward political unionism, will be in the administration of a national health-insurance program, participation in a federal planning commission to guarantee full employment, a voice in the management of industry, formation of cooperative retail stores and cooperative housing ventures, and the establishment of functioning auxiliaries of women, pensioners, and other groups.

If it charts a new course, labor will also take on a new look. It will complete the unfinished revolution begun in the 1930's.

VII

How will such a change come about? Where are the forces to bring it about? Will it take a depression or war to implement such a

A fourth change, of course, is in our own internal life. We strive to make those changes that will take the sting from communist propaganda both overseas and at home. The nation has become far more conscious, for instance, of the minority problem and there has been a sustained—though far from complete—effort to achieve civil rights for the Negro. To a considerable extent this was a reflex to communist propaganda among the colored peoples of the world. We have fattened the "cushions" of our economy by measures such as increased unemployment compensation, higher social-security benefits, farm supports. And it is quite clear that one of the major considerations in priming the pump during the 1958 recession was to stave off a serious depression that would bolster communism all over the world. When the Russians sent their first satellite to the skies in 1957 the United States reacted by examining its educational system to see why American scientists had failed to achieve this goal first. The federal government appropriated large sums to stimulate youth to study the physical sciences. Every Soviet action has its reaction here.

The competition of Soviet Russia has served to centralize power in the federal government and to push the nation further along the path that conservatives describe as "creeping socialism." The state holds the key today not only to questions of war and peace, but to the whole economy. It is by far the nation's biggest business, and business' biggest customer. Its decisions on armaments, disarmament, fiscal expenditures, almost immediately affect the living standards of all its citizens. If the government were to come to terms with Russia to disarm, thereby cutting its budget by $5, $10, or $30 billion, that would plunge America into severe economic difficulties—unless effective measures were taken to spend

these sums for other things. It would also create an immediate political crisis: many business interests would argue that the nation needs tax cuts to "spur business initiative"; labor would probably lobby for public housing for low-income groups, new schools, medical subsidy, higher social security. What the government did finally would determine whether millions would find work or be unemployed.

In the final analysis, competitive coexistence with Russia will either block America's progress or spur it to new great heights. Either way it is evident that the nation will not stand still.

IV

The drastic changes in American capitalism, dictated by the cold war, pose basic problems for American labor as well. The movement, it is clear, has lost its forward momentum. For the third time since the Civil War it is at an impasse. As in 1886 and 1935, it can make no further progress unless it finds a new direction.

Most union leaders console themselves that their problems are essentially moral ones. They feel that once they clean house and remove the stigma of racketeering placed over their heads by congressional committees, they can regain the initiative. A moral purge of the unsavory elements in the house of labor, these men insist, will make it possible once again to organize the unorganized and intensify labor's efforts as a political pressure group. In line with this approach the second AFL-CIO convention in December, 1957, reaffirmed its ethical-practice codes. It directed affiliates to run their affairs democratically, hold conventions at least

issues before they come to the AFL-CIO convention and it has no say in choosing the delegates except the rather ambiguous one of electing the national officers of their union periodically.

3. The city central bodies would be revived as a potent force helping strikes, coordinating joint activity of local unions, initiating new organizational drives, resolving jurisdictional disputes at the home level.

4. The AFL-CIO itself would be given the right to inspect the books of all affiliates, down to the local-union level, and take disciplinary action against union leaders and organizations guilty of malpractices.

5. The movement would not only adopt a more extensive code of ethics but a code of democracy. To revitalize labor's leadership it is necessary to give it a sense of identification with the rank-and-file workers it represents. Provisions are needed limiting a union official's salary to that of the highest-paid worker in his jurisdiction. That would cut the pay of men like David McDonald, George Harrison, and others by eight- or nine-tenths, but it would bring them closer to the outlook of the members they represent. Another possible provision is that the labor leader go back to the shop for short periods of three months or six months, periodically—again to identify further with the men he represents.

6. The movement would adopt an unequivocal position on industrial unionism, and take steps to merge the building trades into one industrial organization, rather than the many craft groups that exist now.

7. Labor would adopt a policy of collective bargaining by industry or groups of industries, and fight for extension of benefits won for the unionized worker to the unorganized one. This would seriously cripple racketeering, because

1958, an Allis-Chalmers Inter-Union Joint Conference was formed of delegates from the Auto Workers, Steelworkers, IUE, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Machinists, and Firemen and Oilers. Each of these unions has pledged to ask for the same basic pledge from the employer. We can expect that in the future hundreds more of these councils will be established, and that in time they will gain increasing freedom of action from their national unions.

How the third party itself will be organized is hard to say. If it follows the British pattern, the AFL-CIO will be part of an alliance with labor, farm, church, liberal, socialist, and other organizations who are willing to form the new "consensus" that Chester Bowles speaks of. In that case the individual union would be automatically affiliated with the labor party, paying per capita taxes to it, but the individual union member would be active in his own ward or district political club only if he wished to undertake the additional activity.

The AFL-CIO itself, as part of the new course, would make a number of significant structural and ethical changes. Perhaps the most important would be:

1. Acceptance of direct membership from the councils. This would weaken the centralized hold of the national unions.

2. Provisions for direct elections to the annual or bi-annual AFL-CIO conventions by the local unions, rather than by the national unions. Today the conventions are far from democratic bodies, even though they are conducted democratically. Everyone can speak; every delegate can oppose the leadership's policy. The trouble is that the delegates are not elected but usually *appointed* by the national-union executive boards. The rank and file at the grass roots are not given the opportunity to discuss every four years, and expel anyone "commonly known to be a crook or racketeer preying on the labor movement and its good name." Union leaders were admonished to keep a wary eye on welfare funds and to liquidate any business investments where there is a "conflict of interests." To show that it meant business the Federation expelled three organizations, including its most powerful affiliate, the Teamsters' Union.

There were many deficiencies in the codes. The most glaring was the one on business investments. While the Federation declaims against business investment where there is a "conflict of interests," it does not condemn business activity as such. Can a union official who owns tens of thousands of dollars of property or factories of his own really sympathize with the plight of exploited workers? It seems doubtful. Another deficiency was in the terms of office; almost any bureaucrat can consolidate a machine in four years' time. The codes failed to mention "sweetheart" contracts, nor did they contain rules against crossing the picket line of another union. They set up no independent machinery for policing or investigation. Up to the present the Federation's Ethical Practices Committee has depended almost exclusively on information furnished by the various Senate committees.

Nonetheless, with all these defects, the codes reflect a change in climate within the house of labor, and the new vigilance is no doubt irreversible.

"Labor has no ills," wrote the *Oregon Labor Press,* "that the good medicine of democracy cannot cure." This answer, however, is far too simple. Democracy cannot be injected into the labor movement by fiat, by passing resolutions. It is part of a process of involving the rank-and-file members in struggles for idealistic objectives. As things stand, most na-

tional unions and tens of thousands of local unions *are* democratic. Formally they have all the safeguards needed for countervailing power. But labor's democracy today, like that in society generally, is not a meaningful one. It is a manipulative type of democracy. In all spheres of American life democracy no longer seems to mean the full participation of the individual in every facet of government, but the right of the Big State, Big Business, Big Madison Avenue to *manipulate* the individual in any direction they see fit, so long as in the process of manipulation there is no resort to force or police terror. This is the essence of our new conformity. The individual submits to subtle and ceaseless manipulation; he is not an active part of the democratic process.

The same type of manipulative "democracy" prevails in the labor movement. "If one asks," writes Sumner Slichter, in *Challenge of Industrial Relations,* "whether unions give their members what they want, the proper answer is that for most unions the question is irrelevant. The great majority of the members do not have much opportunity or desire to consider and discuss alternative policies. Hence they are not to be regarded as making a choice. The proper question to ask is: 'Do the members like what they get?' The answer to that question is usually 'Yes.'" The rank and file influences the leaders, Slichter claims, but it does not participate in decision-making, except at the lower, and least important, levels.

Neither ethical practice codes nor resolutions on democracy can, in themselves, wake the labor movement from its state of suspended animation. Superficially, it seems to lack nothing for a great new advance. It has the necessary funds (far more than in the 1930's), and the necessary organizers to organize the unorganized. It has scores of competent public-relations men and lobbyists to present its point

business unionism and rehabilitate the institutionalized social unionism. The point is that no simple structural changes, adoption of ethical codes, or mechanical attempts at infusing democracy into the undemocratic sectors of the movement are enough. Business unionism can be checked only to the extent that the rank and file is involved in union affairs to act as a real countervailing power. And the rank and file can be involved only if it receives an insurgent impulse.

In the process of forging a political unionism, the movement will inevitably change its structure and impose a new moral self-discipline. As the old behavior patterns are jettisoned, radically new ones will take their place. It is impossible to blueprint the forms of tomorrow's unions but we can—tentatively—outline some of the changes.

Until the AFL, the city central bodies were the power center of the movement. Then the national unions became the power center. The centralized structure of these unions today is a halter around labor's neck. The national unions are necessary to labor to match economic power with management. But their power must be checked by the countervailing power of other labor bodies and the rank and file. To make a new turn, labor will inevitably add new bodies and alter its structure. Side by side with the national union there will evolve, on the one hand, the political labor club, and on the other, the council of unions. Thus the members of ten or fifteen local unions in various internationals that deal with Montgomery Ward would form an autonomous council to deal with the same employer. The six or eight unions at Borg-Warner—in the United Auto Workers, Steelworkers, Machinists, Allied Industrial Workers — would form a Borg-Warner council. The Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO is already taking steps in this direction. In July,

look into the lives and views of the hundreds of candidates from which one must choose on election day? The only sensible type of politics is one where a party program is sacrosanct, and all members of the party pledge to work for that program if elected. In that way the voter knows *what* he is voting for, rather than just *who*. He votes for ideas rather than names. The "vote for the man" type of politics offers the voter only little choice and great confusion. It does not really involve him in political decision; it is part of the "manipulative" democracy of our conformist era. An independent party of labor would not only have a consistently liberal or radical program, but would of necessity be a different kind of party as well: it would be a "responsible" party whose voters would know in advance what they were voting for.

VI

The purpose of a labor union is to fight against injustice. At each period in history it must find new objectives and new organizational forms to fire its membership with an idealistic *elan*. To accomplish this the leadership of labor must be able to rise above its milieu, to chart a new course. Once this happens the old, conservative union forms are immediately on the defensive. The new course charted by Peter McGuire and Samuel Gompers in 1886 swept aside the Old Knights of Labor. The new course charted by Lewis, Hillman, and the radicals in 1935 forced the AFL seriously on the defensive, and for a time threatened to engulf it. It survived only because it bent sufficiently with the winds to ride out the storm. Now, as we enter the 1960's and a historical turning point for capitalism itself, a new course of political unionism can destroy

of view in the right places. It is certainly better placed to move forward than a quarter of a century ago.

What is missing, unfortunately, is what C. Wright Mills calls the "insurgent impulse." Labor has once again exhausted its *elan vital*. It is incapable of galvanizing millions of workers to zealous sacrifices. It is fighting today's wars with yesterday's weapons—very much as France tried to fight the second World War with the Maginot Line concepts of World War I. Today's wars are political, but labor's chief efforts are on the economic plane. At least 90 per cent—probably more—of labor's efforts remains in collective bargaining. Labor refuses to face up to the demands of a new era.

In the 1930's labor was still fighting against industrial tyranny and starvation wages. That battle is still far from won—for the unorganized and for Little Labor. But it has been achieved for the mass-production and construction workers. The movement itself is far from the inconsequential force of three million it was a quarter of a century ago; it is now the largest single-interest bloc in the nation. American labor, just like Western European labor a half century ago, needs new objectives. It has, so to speak, exhausted the "old enemy." The new one is essentially—though not completely—a political one; labor must be ready to accept a far broader social responsibility than it has been willing to assume up to now. That is particularly true in an era of hydrogen bombs, cold wars, the second industrial revolution, and competitive coexistence. If American workers can be fired with an "insurgent impulse" at all, it is only over such vital issues as peace, full employment, civil rights, welfare legislation. A ten-cents-an-hour wage increase is meaningless if hydrogen bombs begin to fall on Detroit or Chicago. It can't be won at all if there are eight or ten million un-

employed ready to take over the jobs of the employed. It can't be won for the unorganized Negro down South until he first wins civil rights. It is decidedly secondary for the jobless, the aged, and the sick. No matter how the issue is viewed, labor's crisis returns invariably to its relative political impotence.

In essence the dilemma of American labor is: Should it continue as a mere political pressure group, lobbying through "friends" in Congress for its objectives, or must it launch a new crusade through a new political party?

V

The objective of politics is state power; every political party must aspire to govern.

A pressure group is justified only when the political objective of the group is a limited one, when its interests are confined to a relatively small area. A lobbying group for veterans seeks only such partial objectives as larger bonus payments, better hospital facilities, or lower-interest rates on FHA loans. A pressure group for the oil industry seeks higher depletion allowances, restrictions on oil imports, stricter enforcement of "allowables." But a labor movement of eighteen million has political objectives as wide and as broad as society itself. It cannot seek special-interest laws merely for labor, because its destiny is tied up with the fate of the whole nation. As a defensive measure it can act as "pressure group" to repeal the Taft-Hartley Act or right-to-work legislation. But, for the rest, anything that affects America affects the labor movement immediately and directly: inflation, peace, disarmament, foreign aid, taxes, the military budget, farm policy, tariffs, welfare legislation, schools, medical

look" in the house of labor. It is a method of involving the rank-and-file worker, rather than the leader alone, in political life. In many respects it performs some of the activities of the labor-representation committees in England, prior to the formation of the Labour party there. Community political activity has given the St. Louis teamsters real political power in that city. They were successful, at one point, in defeating a proposed new city charter. "For the first time in metropolitan area history," wrote the *East St. Louis Journal,* "Labor's rank and file followed Labor leadership in defeating the proposed new St. Louis City Charter.... If there are those who fear this Labor experiment in grass roots participation in government, let them go into the hinterland themselves and woo the citizen where he lives."

Unfortunately all too few labor leaders have enough confidence in the rank-and-file worker to organize him for such political action. The old-line unionists are afraid that it would sweep them from power in the union itself; it would shake up the bureaucratic machines of the business unionists. The newer leaders, around Reuther, are not so much afraid of the rank and file, as inflexible. They continue to fight only a defensive battle as a tail to the liberal Democrats. With such an approach the best they have been able to do is moderate some of the blows against labor. They are not re-invigorating either the labor movement or society as such with any evangelical impulse. They are only entrenching traditional forms of politics that are historically outmoded.

The Democratic party is really two parties, and the Southern Dixiecrat wing not only controls the key congressional committees, but has a veto power over all forward-looking legislation. Furthermore, the American concept that "you vote for the man not the party" is woefully immature and inadequate. Who can

some areas; in others—such as low-cost housing—it has fallen behind.

Admittedly there is no ground swell for a labor party at this juncture. But labor could pose the problem and take rudimentary steps in that direction. It could cut its ties with the Democratic party and disavow completely its Dixiecrat and center wing. It could run candidates of its own on a limited scale, against both the Democrats and Republicans. It could establish an embryonic independent political structure that would form the basis for the next step in the future.

In St. Louis, Local 688 of the Teamsters' Union has developed a pioneer "Community Action Program." The union members are organized not only at the shop level but at the community level as well. In addition to shop stewards and shop meetings, they elect community stewards and hold regular community meetings. In some wards, where membership is large, a regular full-time office has been opened. Among the day-to-day political activities of community stewards are such political "grievances" as police protection, street lighting, housing, sanitation, sewage, safety, and all other neighborhood problems. These stewards meet with aldermen, councilmen and other local officials, and they are organized city-wide into a Community Stewards' Assembly which meets regularly to take up problems such as rat control, city-country coordination, transportation, a free city college, and the like. The program is so extensive that it takes thirty-five cents a month out of each member's dues and has a full-time coordinator.

Such political action, of course, is on an elementary level. It does not come to grips with the problems of war and peace or economic reorganization. But it is a beginning toward what Harold Gibbons calls a "new

laws. Such issues require more extensive activity than lobbying; they are the meat and marrow of a political party's program. Labor, because of its expansive social needs, can hardly entrust them to the hands of "friends of labor" who are not directly accountable to labor. It cannot rest its political cause in the liberal minority wing inside the Democratic party. It needs firmer control over its "friends" than the current *ad hoc* relationship, or the loose alliance through the Americans for Democratic Action. It cannot come to the political table begging for crumbs, because it is too vital and too big a force. Eventually it must make an independent place for itself.

Throughout its history American labor has either formed its own parties, as with the labor parties of the 1820's, or has been toying with the idea. The notion of a labor party comes up repeatedly. After World War II there were a number of conferences to set up a third party, but all of them came to naught. The United Auto Workers had the issue on its agenda for five or six years, until it was sidetracked by Reuther in favor of a "realignment" within the Democratic party. Emil Mazey publicly advocated a labor party until two or three years ago. When the AFL and CIO merged in 1955, Michael Quill of the Transport Workers' Union demanded that the new organization pledge itself to a third party before his organization would affiliate. "I believe," he said, "the CIO is doing too much bowing and scraping before the Democratic party. They say the CIO has no other place to go. But I maintain we have some other place to go. CIO should declare its position now on an independent party—before the merger become final." The Mechanics' Educational Society of America, another AFL-CIO affiliate, has advocated formation of a labor party since its inception. The social unionists as a whole, however, have not yet accepted this

position. They insist on remaining a mere pressure group.

One of the obvious weaknesses of this approach is the lack of interest by the rank and file. In the 1956 elections, when the AFL-CIO was asking every member to contribute a single dollar for its political arm, COPE, it collected $623,158. Only one of every twenty-three or twenty-four union members was willing to contribute even $1. Various publicists make much ado about "labor in politics" but the fact is that outside of a few areas, such as Michigan, where the United Auto Workers have done a creditable job of infiltrating Democratic party ranks, labor's participation is minute. Politicians are willing to pay a price for labor support because it lends an aura of "liberalism" to their candidacy. The words, "Endorsed by organized labor," are more important in wooing the middle class and liberal vote than that of the workingman. The majority of the workers remain pro-Democratic, not because of their union leaders, but because of the New Deal tradition which gives the older party the stamp of "poor man's party." But workers will not ring doorbells in any large number either for the Democrats themselves or for a labor movement which supports the Democrats. Polls consistently show that labor voting in elections is smaller than that of the middle classes. The rank-and-file worker, wary of the politicians of both parties—"They're all a bunch of crooks anyway," he says—does not feel they are fighting his battles.

James McDevitt, national director of the AFL-CIO's political committee, COPE, discloses that less than 40 per cent of American union members are registered to vote. A survey by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of its ranks in one Delaware and seven Maryland counties showed that only 20 to 30 per cent were registered. Unionists just do not feel they have a vital stake in the traditional politics. They vote with their feet, by staying home. They are not roused by their leaders' urgings. In an article in *Harper's,* in August, 1958, Dick Bruner, who worked on the political staff of an ex-CIO union, charged that labor is short of political vitality because:

1. It lacks ideas of its own. On many of the most fundamental political and social issues, it is hard to distinguish labor's position from that of the National Association of Manufacturers.

2. It is pathetically weak on political organizing ability.

3. It has adopted the "mass-market" concept of many big corporations, and its leaders treat the rank and file with cynicism..

The pressure-group policy has been a lamentable failure. AFL-CIO writers, with a little Madison Avenue sleight of hand, can compile an impressive statistic of how many senators "voted right" this year as compared to last, or how many congressmen "voted right" over the past decade. The union leaders can point to innumerable conferences they have held with successive Presidents, and to thirty or more labor attachés that sit in key American embassies overseas. But the unassailable fact is that labor has been steadily losing ground in the last decade; its voice in the halls of government is less than a whisper. Though it has published tons of pamphlets and held scores of meetings and lobbying sessions, it has been unable to modify the Taft-Hartley law. It has been unable, except in one or two cases, to repeal right-to-work laws. It has been unable to reverse the course of the national Labor Relations Board. It has been unable to secure bold legislation in new social fields, such as, for example, health insurance. Where social legislation already exists, labor has been able with its liberal friends to make a few changes for the better in